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Browning

Poems and plays.

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THE DRAMA

THE POEMS OF ROBERT  
BROWNING WITH INTRO-  
DUCTION BY ARTHUR WAUGH  
VOLUME I 1833-1844

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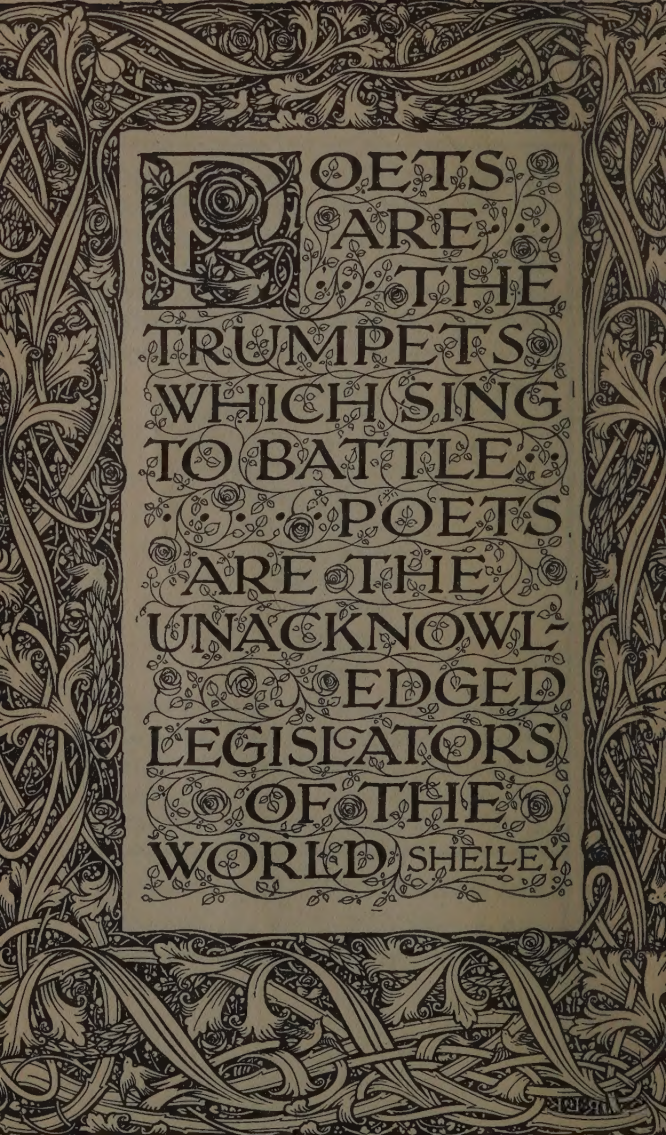


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OF THE  
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THE POEMS  
& PLAYS OF  
ROBERT ©  
BROWNING  
1833-1844



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THE  
LIFE OF  
ROBERT  
BROWNING  
1833-1881

FIRST ISSUE OF THIS EDITION . . . February 1906  
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September 1909; June 1911



## INTRODUCTION

THE poems of Robert Browning contained in these two volumes will be found to include, with one conspicuous exception, almost all the poetry by which he is best reputed and for the sake of which he is best beloved. That one exception, of course, is *The Ring and the Book*, which indeed constitutes a volume in itself, and which for several years to come can appear only in the complete and copyright editions of his work. For a full appreciation of the development of Browning's genius one *must* read *The Ring and the Book*; it marks the culmination of his elaborate method, his search for truth by the examination and rejection of falsehood, his dissection of the universal to its manifestation in the individual, and his apotheosis of the individual as an incarnation of the universal. But after *The Ring and the Book* he added but little either to his own contributions to human thought or to the treasure-house of English poetry. None but his more uncritical admirers can find much satisfaction in *Red-cotton Night-cap Country*, *Ferishtah's Fancies*, or even, perhaps, *Fifine at the Fair*. The true heart of Browning's poetry beats, and beats naturally, in the work of his maturity. Few men produce much significant poetry after they have passed the limit of sixty years.

The mere bulk of Robert Browning's poetry is indeed astonishing. The two volumes here offered represent considerably less than half his entire output, and yet they themselves make no small show among the records of English poetry. To have written so much, and to have preserved a uniform level of excellence would have been to accomplish the impossible; and it would be vanity to

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pretend that Browning's pen was not, especially in the later years of his life, too energetically prolific for the demands of even his own eager and creative temperament. His golden era of production undoubtedly closed with the death of his wife. In losing her he lost not only a source of inspiration that was implanted in the very heart of his being, but also a kindly, tactful, searching critic to whom his work owed much, even beyond the primal motive of sympathy and understanding. Turbid and troubled as much of her own work was, Mrs. Browning was fully alive to the risks of obscurity and suppression in her husband's. Her criticism and advice were always prompting him to lucidity, and it is indisputable that the best and most vital of Browning's poetry was produced under her influence. In saying this, one does not forget the date of *The Ring and the Book*, which was published seven years after her death, but was written with the afterglow of her influence full upon him, and shows at every turn the inspiration of her memory. In later years that influence, though never forgotten, inevitably lost its immediate hold. The tendency to difficulty of expression and crudity of music returned incorrigibly, so that Browning's poetic career presents the curious paradox that the most intricate of his poems were produced at a time when people had ceased to complain of his obscurity. He had become a vogue; societies had arisen to expound him; and it was now a sign of an uncultivated mind to fail to appreciate his poetry. That vogue has long since settled down into reasonable and critical admiration, and it is now generally admitted that the really significant period of his production closed with the early seventies. What followed is chiefly interesting as evidence of the indomitable energy of a spirit that could be stilled by death alone.

We have here, then, in these two volumes, the greater portion of Browning's best-known poetry, and it will not, perhaps, be without interest to consider the in-

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fluences that went to mould it, and the circumstances under which it was produced. Of the bare circumstances themselves there is little to record, for the external incidents of Browning's life throw but a flickering light upon the development of his genius. He was born (on the 7th of May, 1812) of well-educated, middle-class parents living in Camberwell. His father was a clerk in the Bank of England, who had read deeply, both in classical and modern literature, and took a lively interest in the training of his boy's mind. His mother, whose maiden name was Wiedemann, was of Scottish-German descent, and a woman of great tenderness of feeling, with a sympathetic gift for music. He was devoted to both his parents, who seem in turn to have been devoted to him, and he grew up in a strongly religious atmosphere. His mother had been brought up in the Presbyterian Church, and joined the Independent Congregation, persuading her husband to attach himself to the same community. The young Browning, therefore, was trained upon the lines of Nonconformity, and was remembered years afterwards, by at least one of his ministers, for the earnest expression of his face during service, and the keen sincerity of his devotions. An ordinary school training followed, and, by the time he was twelve years old, the boy had produced a manuscript volume of verses, which his parents were half inclined to publish. He afterwards said that, so far as he could remember, these immature pieces were distinguished by nothing but a "mellifluous sweetness"—which certainly seems to suggest that the poet had not yet found his natural voice. No publisher, however, could be found to venture upon their production, and the manuscript was in time destroyed. Hence it comes that Browning bibliography is fortunately relieved from all unprofitable trifling with discarded *juvenilia*.

In those days Byron was the ruling influence in

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Browning's taste; but one day, seeing a volume displayed upon a bookstall, with the label, "Mr. Shelley's Atheistical Poem—Very Scarce," he begged his mother to procure him Shelley's poems, which she indulgently did, with results far beyond her kind maternal reckoning. The young Browning plunged deeply into the Shelleyan fount, and was at once carried off his feet. A sudden flood of new ideas overwhelmed him; the orthodoxy of the meeting-house lost its attraction; he became restless and disturbed in his convictions. Some vague talk about the necessity of atheism must have distressed his parents' affection, and a sudden access of egoism alienated his friends. The young man was growing up, and, after the manner of young men, believed himself to be equipped to solve the mysteries of the universe.

In the full flush of Shelley's influence, he set himself to the production of *Pauline*. The influence is indeed apparent throughout the poem, and in more than a superficial significance. The young Browning was captured, not only, as less keen temperaments are apt to be captured, by the inspiriting sense of revolt which makes Shelley's poetry so intoxicating to the young mind first emerging from the bondage of conventionality; he was, above all things, enraptured by contact with a mind that seemed to soar above "the shadow of our night" into the clear empyrean of an almost superhuman aspiration. Here was a being to whose enthusiasm nothing seemed impossible—a kinsman of the gods, knowing good and evil.

"Sun-Treader, I believe in God and Truth  
And Love; and as one just escaped from death  
Would bind himself in bands of friends to feel  
He lives indeed, so, I would lean on thee!"

The expression is overcharged; it has all the red-hot ebullience of youth; but the inspiration was to tone



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down into one of the most characteristic phases of Browning's poetry. In later years he expressed a quite disproportionate dislike for the poem, and, diving more deeply into a study of Shelley's character, he lived to feel a plentiful lack of sympathy with the poet who had inspired it. But *Pauline* is a wonderful production for a boy of twenty, and it contains a definite germ of Browning's mature attitude to life. The aspiration of personality, the unfulfilled ambition of the human soul, the striving of the imperfect towards perfection—all these themes of his maturity are clearly foreshadowed in this first "crab of the shapely tree of life in his Fool's Paradise."

"I am made up of an intensest life,  
Of a most clear idea of consciousness  
Of self, distinct from all its qualities,  
From all affections, passions, feelings, powers;  
And thus far it exists, if tracked, in all:  
But linked, in me, to self-supremacy,  
Existing as the centre of all things,  
Most potent to create and rule and call  
Upon all things to minister to it;  
And to a principle of restlessness  
Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel all—  
This is myself; and I should thus have been  
Though gifted lower than the meanest soul."

The germ of the true Browning is certainly here; and here let us consider, as briefly as possible, what is this central theme which animates all Browning's poetry, this moral idea which, in some form or other, is at the heart of all his work. Probably no poet in the world ever worked in more diverse material to the direction of a single end; whatever the complexity of detail in Browning's work, there is never any sort of complexity of theme: the same "lesson" is implicit in it all.

In all his "utterances of imaginary persons, not mine," the concern of the poet is with the application of ideas to life, with the degree of failure or success possible to a

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hampered human aspiration. Browning took the human soul as the unit of humanity, and he found it let and hindered by the slough of its mortality. It is bounded in a nutshell, but it trembles with the fire of boundless ambition. Perfect success is impossible to it; failure is inevitable, but the shame or the honour of the failure must depend upon the height of the aim, the sublimity of the ambition. Man may fail through two kinds of shortcoming. He may fail because, feeling the impossibility of realising the promptings of his spiritual nature, he stifles and chokes his spiritual ambition, so that he becomes a mere machine, incapable of nobler hope and aspiration. Such a failure is disgraceful, "earthly, sensual, devilish." But, on the other hand, a man may fail because the intensity of his aspiration is too strong for the circumstances that hedge it in; like Icarus, he may aspire to soar to heaven, and the waxen wings of his human nature may fail him in the flight. He falls indeed from the height, but not "like Lucifer, never to rise again." For the aspiration of the human soul has this consolation: it knows itself to be too great, too strong for its surroundings; the world is not worthy of it, and it is impossible that its sphere of activity should be cabined and confined by its existence here. So spiritual a fire can never be quenched in death. This world, therefore, must needs be a preparation for some fuller, richer sphere of activity beyond; our life, as we know it, must be a probation for some freer, more ennobling life in the future. Life, then, must be devoted to the fostering of the emotions, the training of the soul in the school of self-realisation. Failures there may, and must be, for the ambition is illimitable and the field is limited, but the dignity of the aim deprives the failure of bitterness. Achievement is in the pursuit.

It is well for the student of Browning to get this idea clearly implanted in his imagination before he begins to make a study of the poet's work, for with that idea fixed

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before him he will find half the difficulties and obscurities of the poet's expression fade away. And, perhaps, if ever an introduction to a volume of poetry is justified, it may be held to be justified in the case of Browning, in making some attempt to clear the vision of the inexperienced reader, by setting this animating moral idea before his mind. With that idea steadily before us, we may the more easily continue our consideration of the steps by which the poet developed the idea in the course of his work, and of the circumstances in his own life which strengthened him in this strenuous spiritual conviction.

At first the poet seemed to make but little way. *Pauline* attracted scarcely any attention, and very few copies were sold. But Browning was not the sort of man to be discouraged by a poor start, and was soon hard at work at *Paracelsus*, the idea of which had been suggested to him by one of his friends, the Count Amédée de Ripert Monclar, an accomplished young Frenchman, who was in England as an agent for secret communication between the royal exiles and their friends in France. Browning began the poem in the autumn of 1834, and working hard all the winter, had completed the manuscript by the middle of the following April. Considering the length of the poem this performance was something of a *tour de force*, and as such it was speedily recognised. At first, indeed, there seemed some ground for disappointment. Talfourd's *Ion* was just then fresh from the press, and the reading public, which seldom admits two heroes into its favour in a single season, was engrossed in praise of the great lawyer's drama, and found no time to consider *Paracelsus*. But just as a failure seemed possible, the book fell into the hands of that bluff, genial, wise patron of literature, John Forster, who sat down forthwith and wrote a soundly critical notice of it for *The Examiner*, reading which, a number of literary people turned to the book itself, and began to talk about the appearance of a new poet. Browning was inquired for, discovered, and invited out, and then, within

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a month, in the last days of November and December, 1835, made two acquaintances which were to have no little effect upon the next few years of his career. The first was Macready, whom he met at dinner at W. J. Fox's, and to whom he at once sent a copy of *Paracelsus*. The second was John Forster himself, to whom he already owed so much, although he did not know it. Macready was delighted with *Paracelsus*, and asked Browning to come and see the old year out at Elstree. To get to Elstree in those days one took the North London coach from the Blue Posts, and while the horses were putting in, Browning and Forster passed and repassed each other on the pavement, with a growing suspicion that they were bound to the same house. When they met by Macready's fire, Forster asked Browning if he had seen a notice of *Paracelsus* in *The Examiner*, and the poet thus learnt for the first time to whom he was indebted for the most helpful hand he had yet received upon the path of public recognition. He felt instinctively at ease among so many evidences of approbation, and attracted general attention by his bright manner and entertaining conversation. Out of this meeting there ripened Browning's brief season of alliance with the stage. A few months later, at a party at Talfourd's, under circumstances sufficiently familiar, Macready suggested to Browning that he should write him a play, and Browning, who had been busying himself with the Stuart period, proposed *Strafford* as the subject. A year later the play was produced at Covent Garden, with Macready as *Strafford* and Helen Faucit as *Lady Carlisle*.

Browning's dramatic period is intensely interesting to the student of his life and work, for it unquestionably exercised an overwhelming influence upon his later development. To begin with, it turned his attention to dramatic method, and set him working upon the task of making his characters display themselves, as it were before an audience, by word and suggestion. And, in the second place, the eventual failure of his plays to satisfy the taste



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of the general public, divorced him once and for all from the desire to write for the stage, and did so early enough in his career to enable him to concentrate the best years of his life upon the kind of work for which his talent was best adapted. In this the sequence of his work presents an exact contrast to that of Tennyson. Neither of the great Victorian poets was by nature a writer of plays, but both essayed the drama, and both had plays produced with moderate success. Browning, however, discovered his own limitations as a dramatist while still a young man, while it was the dream of Tennyson's old age that he might still do something to revive the smouldering embers of British dramatic poetry. The contrast, perhaps, has a more than superficial significance.

*Strafford* was not a failure, but it was scarcely a glowing success. The story is not well told, and the manner of its telling presupposes a considerable knowledge of the period in the spectator or reader—a serious shortcoming in a stage-play. But it contains some splendid speeches, and the last act is full of quick and eager drama. It had quite enough promise to encourage its author to write more in the same vein. He did not, however, immediately pursue the opportunity. *Sordello*, which he had begun and set aside, was next brought to completion, and during the next few years he published the series of *Bells and Pomegranates*, which illustrate, more perhaps than anything in his career, the way in which his taste for the stage and the natural genius of his poetry were acting and reacting upon one another.

The first of these, *Pippa Passes*, may indeed be held to show the two elements in solution, for, while partially dramatic in form, it is wholly lyrical in intention. The passage of Pippa across the stage, keeping her childish holiday in a wandering day of song, influences the conduct, and arrests the destiny, of people by whom she is not even always seen and to whom she is entirely unknown. The *Dramatic Lyrics*, again, vigorous and

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analytic, show the poet occupied in that dissection of motive upon which all sound drama must be founded, while *King Victor and King Charles* and *A Blot on the 'Scutcheon* are stage-drama pure and simple. It was the last-named of these that ended Browning's day-dream of a stage success. Macready, having accepted the play and put it in rehearsal, evidently lost heart in it; there were misunderstandings and unpleasantnesses among the company; and it is impossible to acquit Macready himself of rather pusillanimous conduct towards both the poet and his own fellow-actors. At any rate, the result was a serious breach between Macready and Browning, and on the part of the poet a final abandonment of all ambition to see his plays upon the stage. From henceforth he devoted himself, during the prime of his period of production, to that concentrated form of dramatic poem for which his genius had so singular and original an aptitude.

In the *Dramatic Lyrics*, we see his talent taking the first firm hold upon this species of composition. Browning may almost be said to have invented the lyrical monodrama; in any case, no other poet has employed it with the same intensity of purpose and depth of intuition. This form of poetry, which reaches its consummation in the incomparable series of *Men and Women*, consists of the dramatic utterance of a dramatically conceived character, revealing itself, under the influence of passionate reflection, and in this revelation displaying also the influences and consequences of a single dramatic situation. There was here a vast opportunity for Browning's peculiarly nervous analysis of the workings of the human soul. Thread and counter-thread of suggestion could be indicated or implied; swift interchange of light and shade could play upon the suffering and aspiration of the brain; and within the limits of a single situation the illimitable possibilities of the "limèd soul" could be traced as fading away into the cloudless blue of eternity. And so Browning

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arrived at the fittest medium for the expression of his peculiar philosophy of life. What that philosophy was we have already briefly considered. It was a revelation of the infinite capacity of the human soul, struggling through failure towards a thwarted self-realisation, and it was now to be displayed in the study of a great number of characters, all in their own ways baulked of perfection, yet all reflecting some light of the universal truth, and all capable of eventual development. Wherein that failure lay, and wherein lay also the possibility of redemption—these were to be the themes henceforward of all the most typical of Robert Browning's poetry.

He had already perfected his method when the one great central event of his life took place, drawing together all the threads of association and of interest. Elizabeth Barrett, the poet, had heard of Robert Browning as soon as any literary student in London; she was indeed among the first readers of *Paracelsus*. An invalid, forced to spend her days in a shaded room, she was yet full of a feverish enthusiasm for literature, and most books of any real significance found their way to her bedside. The *Bells and Pomegranates* had increased her esteem for Browning's genius, and she had expressed her admiration in a well-known verse in *Lady Geraldine's Courtship*. This verse naturally caught Browning's eye, and being full of approbation for her work as a whole, he began expatiating on the subject to her good friend Kenyon, who retorted, "Why don't you write and tell her so? She is an invalid, and sympathy is a great help to her." Browning went home and took Kenyon's advice, and so began the romance which ended only with Robert Browning's death.

The story of that eager friendship, merging in a secret courtship and elopement, is so well known, and has been so often re-told, that there is no need here to follow it from strength to strength. There were elements in it that

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were painful enough to Browning's susceptibility, for he was the soul of honour, and anything like deceit worked like a madness in his brain. But when once the prison-door had been broken, and the prisoner had escaped, the complete happiness of their marriage, and the sense of intellectual refreshment which sprang from a perfected sympathy made full amends for all uncomfortable memories. They were never parted for a single day in their fifteen years of married life, and during that time they both put forth the best of their poetry. Browning's *Men and Women* and his wife's *Sonnets from the Portuguese* were written in the full sunlight of their mutual inspiration.

Of Browning's humble attitude to his wife's genius one word at least must be said : he stood before its revelation as a devout soul before a shrine. His enthusiasm was indeed uncritical : but who could wish it otherwise ? Love, it has been said, is not so much blind as capable of an insight a little deeper than that of the rest of the world. "She has genius," he wrote ; "I am only a pains-taking fellow. Can't you imagine a clever sort of angel who plots and plans and tries to build up something ? He wants to make you see it as he sees it, shows you one point of view, carries you off to another, hammering into your head the things that he wants you to understand ; and, whilst all this bother is going on, God Almighty turns you off a little star. That's the difference between us." In that consummately modest sentence the perfection of Browning's artistic development is revealed. Within the limits of his own possibilities, judged from his own standard of apparent failure and inherent success, neither life nor art had any more to teach him.

Browning's marriage, in short, was the last stage in his artistic education ; he had now brought his life and his art into harmony, and what remained was only to listen to the promptings of his genius, with an austere neglect of the voices from without. And, during the

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next few years, with that harmony of influence fully attuned in his life, he illustrated his glowing doctrine of life and work with an infinity of facets, and an almost dazzling variety of side-lights. As each new character is displayed, with amazing subtlety of sympathy and insight, the eye is almost blinded with the flashing of those side-lights, and the one bright "gem-like flame" at the heart of things is occasionally submerged. Penetrate the outward scintillations, however, and it is always found to be burning steadily and clear. To realise himself in all his emotions and aspirations, to grow into form and beauty like the clay upon the potter's wheel—that is the whole duty of man.

"Ay, note that Potter's wheel,  
That metaphor ! and feel  
Why Time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—  
Thou, to whom fools propound,  
When the wine makes its round,  
'Since life fleets, all is change ; the Past gone, seize To-day !'

Fool ! all that is, at all,  
Lasts ever, past recall ;  
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure :  
What entered into thee,  
*That* was, is, and shall be :  
Time's wheel runs back or stops : Potter and clay endure."

It is indeed no new doctrine ; it is as old as Plato, and has reappeared in a score of different forms ; it is inseparable from the teaching of the Hebrew prophets ; it has thrown its roots into the fabric of Christianity. It is, in a word, the elementary doctrine of the continuity of energy. But while new voices are heard upon the mountain of the muses, and new false cries are raised, to lead men, like will-o'-the-wisps, into the mist and quagmire that lie beyond, how stimulating to turn the ear again to the stirring call of this indomitable optimist, this servant of a world in which all service ranks the same with God ; to take his hand in the darkness ; to walk with Greatheart

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through the Valley Perilous ; and to wait, still in hope, for the final realisation of all that humanity must be content to miss !

“The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,  
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,  
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard ;  
Enough that He heard it once : we shall hear it by and by.”

ARTHUR WAUGH.

The following is a list of the works of Robert Browning :—

Pauline, 1833 ; Paracelsus, 1835 ; Strafford, 1837 ; Sordello, 1840 ; Bells and Pomegranates: No. 1, Pippa Passes, 1841 ; No. 2, King Victor and King Charles, 1842 ; No. 3, Dramatic Lyrics, 1842 ; No. 4, The Return of the Druses (a Tragedy), 1843 ; No. 5, A Blot in the 'Scutcheon (a Tragedy), 1843 ; No. 6, Colombe's Birthday (a Play), 1844 ; No. 7, Dramatic Romances and Lyrics, 1845 ; No. 8, Luria ; and A Soul's Tragedy, 1846 ; Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day, 1850 ; Cleon, 1855 ; The Statue and the Bust, 1855 ; Men and Women, 1855 ; Gold Hair : A Legend of Pornic, 1864 ; Dramatis Personæ, 1864 ; The Ring and the Book, 1868 ; Balaustion's Adventure, 1871 ; Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangan, 1871 ; Fifiue at the Fair, 1872 ; Red-cotton Night-cap Country, 1873 ; Aristophanes' Apology, with “A Transcript from Euripides,” and “Last Adventure of Balaustion,” 1875 ; The Inn Album, 1875 ; Pacchiarotto, 1876 ; The Agamemnon of Aeschylus, 1877 ; La Saisiaz : The Two Poets of Croisic, 1878 ; Dramatic Idyls : 1st Series, 1879 ; 2nd Series, 1880 ; Jocoseria, 1883 ; Ferishtah's Fancies, 1884 ; Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in their Day, 1887 ; Essay on Shelley (Introductory Essay to Volume of Shelley's letters (suppressed) 1852), 1888 ; Asolando, 1890 (1889).

In the Browning Society's Papers are published poems which appeared in various Magazines, and were not reprinted in any of the above-named works.

First Collected Ed. 1849 ; 2nd, 1863 ; 3rd, 1868 ; Complete Edition, 1888-1894.

Letters, Ed. T. J. Wise, 1895.



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## PAULINE

### A FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION

Plus ne suis ce que j'ai été,  
Et ne le sçaurois jamais être.—MAROT.

Non dubito, quin titulus libri nostri raritate suâ quamplurimos alliciat ad legendum: inter quos nonnulli obliquæ opinionis, mente languidi, multi etiam maligni, et in ingenium nostrum ingrati accedent, qui temerariâ suâ ignorantia, vix conspecto titulo clamabunt: Nos vetita docere, hæresium semina jacere: piis auribus offendiculo, præclaris ingeniis scandalo esse: . . . adeò conscientia suæ consulentes, ut nec Apollo, nec Musæ omnes, neque Angelus de cælo me ab illorum execratione vindicare queant: quibus et ego nunc consulo, ne scripta nostra legant, nec intelligant, nec meminerint: nam noxia sunt, venenosa sunt: Acherontis ostium est in hoc libro, lapides loquitur, caveant, ne cerebrum illis excutiat. Vos autem, qui æquâ mente ad legendum venitis, si tantam prudentiæ discretionem adhibueritis, quantam in melle legendo apes, jam securi legite. Puto namque vos et utilitatis haud parùm et voluptatis plurimùm accepturos. Quod si qua repereritis, quæ vobis non placeant, mittite illa, nec utimini. NAM ET EGO VOBIS ILLA NON PROBO, SED NARRO. Cætera tamen propterea non respuite. . . . Ideo, si quid liberior dictum sit, ignoscite adolescentiæ nostræ, qui minor quam adolescens hoc opus composui. — *H. Cer. Agrippa, De Occult. Phil.*

London, January, 1833,  
V. A. XX.

# PAULINE

## A FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION

PAULINE, mine own, bend o'er me—thy soft breast  
Shall pant to mine—bend o'er me—thy sweet eyes,  
And loosened hair, and breathing lips, and arms  
Drawing me to thee—these build up a screen  
To shut me in with thee, and from all fear,  
So that I might unlock the sleepless brood  
Of fancies from my soul, their lurking place,  
Nor doubt that each would pass, ne'er to return  
To one so watched, so loved, and so secured.  
But what can guard thee but thy naked love?  
Ah, dearest! whoso sucks a poisoned wound  
Envenoms his own veins,—thou art so good,  
So calm—if thou should'st wear a brow less light  
For some wild thought which, but for me, were kept  
From out thy soul, as from a sacred star.  
Yet till I have unlocked them it were vain  
To hope to sing; some woe would light on me;  
Nature would point at one, whose quivering lip  
Was bathed in her enchantments—whose brow burned  
Beneath the crown, to which her secrets knelt;  
Who learned the spell which can call up the dead,  
And then departed, smiling like a fiend  
Who has deceived God. If such one should seek  
Again her altars, and stand robed and crowned  
Amid the faithful: sad confession first,  
Remorse and pardon, and old claims renewed,  
Ere I can be—as I shall be no more.

I had been spared this shame, if I had sate  
By thee for ever, from the first, in place

## PAULINE

Of my wild dreams of beauty and of good,  
Or with them, as an earnest of their truth.  
No thought nor hope, having been shut from thee,  
No vague wish unexplained—no wandering aim  
Sent back to bind on Fancy's wings, and seek  
Some strange fair world, where it might be a law :  
But doubting nothing, had been led by thee,  
Thro' youth, and saved, as one at length awaked,  
Who has slept thro' a peril. Ah ! vain, vain !

Thou lovest me—the past is in its grave,  
Tho' its ghost haunts us—still this much is ours,  
To cast away restraint, lest a worse thing  
Wait for us in the darkness. Thou lovest me,  
And thou art to receive not love, but faith,  
For which thou wilt be mine, and smile, and take  
All shapes, and shames, and veil without a fear  
That form which music follows like a slave ;  
And I look to thee, and I trust in thee,  
As in a Northern night one looks alway  
Unto the East for morn, and spring and joy.  
Thou seest then my aimless, hopeless state,  
And resting on some few old feelings, won  
Back by thy beauty, would'st that I essay  
The task, which was to me what now thou art :  
And why should I conceal one weakness more ?

Thou wilt remember one warm morn, when Winter  
Crept aged from the earth, and Spring's first breath  
Blew soft from the moist hills—the black-thorn boughs,  
So dark in the bare wood ; when glistening  
In the sunshine were white with coming buds,  
Like the bright side of a sorrow—and the banks  
Had violets opening from sleep like eyes—  
I walked with thee, who knew not a deep shame  
Lurked beneath smiles and careless words, which sought  
To hide it—till they wandered and were mute ;  
As we stood listening on a sunny mound  
To the wind murmuring in the damp copse,  
Like heavy breathings of some hidden thing



## PAULINE

Betrayed by sleep—until the feeling rushed  
That I was low indeed, yet not so low  
As to endure the calmness of thine eyes ;  
And so I told thee all, while the cool breast  
I leaned on altered not its quiet beating ;  
And long ere words, like a hurt bird's complaint,  
Bade me look up and be what I had been,  
I felt despair could never live by thee.  
Thou wilt remember:—thou art not more dear  
Than song was once to me ; and I ne'er sung  
But as one entering bright halls, where all  
Will rise and shout for him. Sure I must own  
That I am fallen—having chosen gifts  
Distinct from theirs—that I am sad—and fain  
Would give up all to be but where I was ;  
Not high as I had been, if faithful found—  
But low and weak, yet full of hope, and sure  
Of goodness as of life—that I would lose  
All this gay mastery of mind, to sit  
Once more with them, trusting in truth and love.  
And with an aim—not being what I am.  
Oh, Pauline ! I am ruined ! who believed  
That tho' my soul had floated from its sphere  
Of wide dominion into the dim orb  
Of self—that it was strong and free as ever :—  
It has conformed itself to that dim orb,  
Reflecting all its shades and shapes, and now  
Must stay where it alone can be adored.  
I have felt this in dreams—in dreams in which  
I seemed the fate from which I fled ; I felt  
A strange delight in causing my decay ;  
I was a fiend, in darkness chained for ever  
Within some ocean-cave ; and ages rolled,  
Till thro' the cleft rock, like a moonbeam, came  
A white swan to remain with me ; and ages  
Rolled, yet I tired not of my first joy  
In gazing on the peace of its pure wings.  
And then I said, " It is most fair to me,  
" Yet its soft wings must sure have suffered change •  
" From the thick darkness—sure its eyes are dim—

## PAULINE

"Its silver pinions must be cramped and numbed  
"With sleeping ages here; it cannot leave me.  
"For it would seem, in light, beside its kind,  
"Withered—tho' here to me most beautiful."  
And then I was a young witch, whose blue eyes,  
As she stood naked by the river springs,  
Drew down a god—I watched his radiant form  
Growing less radiant—and it gladdened me;  
Till one morn, as he sat in the sunshine  
Upon my knees, singing to me of heaven,  
He turned to look at me, ere I could lose  
The grin with which I viewed his perishing.  
And he shrieked and departed, and sat long  
By his deserted throne—but sunk at last,  
Murmuring, as I kissed his lips and curled  
Around him, "I am still a god—to thee."  
Still I can lay my soul bare in its fall,  
For all the wandering and all the weakness  
Will be a saddest comment on the song.  
And if, that done, I can be young again.  
I will give up all gained as willingly  
As one gives up a charm which shuts him out  
From hope, or part, or care, in human kind.  
As life wanes, all its cares, and strife, and toil,  
Seem strangely valueless, while the old trees  
Which grew by our youth's home—the waving mass  
Of climbing plants, heavy with bloom and dew—  
The morning swallows with their songs like words,—  
All these seem clear and only worth our thoughts.  
So aught connected with my early life—  
My rude songs or my wild imaginings,  
How I look on them—most distinct amid  
The fever and the stir of after years!

I ne'er had ventured e'en to hope for this,  
Had not the glow I felt at His award,  
Assured me all was not extinct within.  
HIM whom all honor—whose renown springs up  
Like sunlight which will visit all the world;  
So that e'en they who sneered at him at first,

## PAULINE

Come out to it, as some dark spider crawls  
From his foul nets, which some lit torch invades,  
Yet spinning still new films for his retreat.—  
Thou didst smile, poet,—but, can *we* forgive?

Sun-treader—life and light be thine for ever;  
Thou art gone from us—years go by—and spring  
Gladdens, and the young earth is beautiful,  
Yet thy songs come not—other bards arise,  
But none like thee—they stand—thy majesties,  
Like mighty works which tell some Spirit there  
Hath sat regardless of neglect and scorn,  
Till, its long task completed, it hath risen  
And left us, never to return: and all  
Rush in to peer and praise when all in vain.  
The air seems bright with thy past presence yet,  
But thou art still for me, as thou hast been  
When I have stood with thee, as on a throne  
With all thy dim creations gathered round  
Like mountains,—and I felt of mould like them,  
And creatures of my own were mixed with them,  
Like things half-lived, catching and giving life.  
But thou art still for me, who have adored,  
Tho' single, panting but to hear thy name,  
Which I believed a spell to me alone,  
Scarce deeming thou wert as a star to men—  
As one should worship long a sacred spring  
Scarce worth a moth's flitting, which long grasses cross,  
And one small tree embowers droopingly,  
Joying to see some wondering insect won,  
To live in its few rushes—or some locust  
To pasture on its boughs—or some wild bird  
Stoop for its freshness from the trackless air,  
And then should find it but the fountain-head,  
Long lost, of some great river—washing towns  
And towers, and seeing old woods which will live  
But by its banks, untrod of human foot,  
Which, when the great sun sinks, lie quivering  
In light as some thing lieth half of life  
Before God's foot—waiting a wondrous change

## PAULINE

—Then girt with rocks which seek to turn or stay  
Its course in vain, for it does ever spread  
Like a sea's arm as it goes rolling on,  
Being the pulse of some great country—so  
Wert thou to me—and art thou to the world.  
And I, perchance, half feel a strange regret,  
That I am not what I have been to thee:  
Like a girl one has loved long silently,  
In her first loveliness, in some retreat,  
When first emerged, all gaze and glow to view  
Her fresh eyes, and soft hair, and lips which bleed  
Like a mountain berry. Doubtless it is sweet  
To see her thus adored—but there have been  
Moments, when all the world was in his praise,  
Sweeter than all the pride of after hours.  
Yet, Sun-treader, all hail!—from my heart's heart  
I bid thee hail!—e'en in my wildest dreams,  
I am proud to feel I would have thrown up all  
The wreathes of fame which seemed o'erhanging me,  
To have seen thee, for a moment, as thou art.

And if thou livest—if thou lovest, spirit!  
Remember me, who set this final seal  
To wandering thought—that one so pure as thou  
Could never die. Remember me, who flung  
All honor from my soul—yet paused and said,  
“There is one spark of love remaining yet,  
“For I have nought in common with him—shapes  
“Which followed him avoid me, and foul forms  
“Seek me, which ne'er could fasten on his mind;  
“And tho' I feel how low I am to him,  
“Yet I aim not even to catch a tone  
“Of all the harmonies which he called up,  
“So one gleam still remains, altho' the last.”  
Remember me—who praise thee e'en with tears,  
For never more shall I walk calm with thee;  
Thy sweet imaginings are as an air,  
A melody, some wond'rous singer sings,  
Which, though it haunt men oft in the still eve,

## PAULINE

They dream not to essay ; yet it no less,  
But more is honored. I was thine in shame,  
And now when all thy proud renown is out,  
I am a watcher, whose eyes have grown dim  
With looking for some star—which breaks on him,  
Altered, and worn, and weak, and full of tears.

Autumn has come—like Spring returned to us,  
Won from her girlishness—like one returned  
A friend that was a lover—nor forgets  
The first warm love, but full of sober thoughts  
Of fading years ; whose soft mouth quivers yet  
With the old smile—but yet so changed and still !  
And here am I the scoffer, who have probed  
Life's vanity, won by a word again  
Into my old life—for one little word  
Of this sweet friend, who lives in loving me,  
Lives strangely on my thoughts, and looks, and words,  
As fathoms down some nameless ocean thing  
Its silent course of quietness and joy.  
O dearest, if indeed, I tell the past,  
May'st thou forget it as a sad sick dream ;  
Or if it linger—my lost soul too soon  
Sinks to itself, and whispers, we shall be  
But closer linked—two creatures whom the earth  
Bears singly—with strange feelings, unrevealed  
But to each other ; or two lonely things  
Created by some Power, whose reign is done,  
Having no part in God, or his bright world,  
I am to sing ; whilst ebbing day dies soft,  
As a lean scholar dies, worn o'er his book,  
And in the heaven stars steal out one by one,  
As hunted men steal to their mountain watch.  
I must not think—lest this new impulse die  
In which I trust. I have no confidence,  
So I will sing on—fast as fancies come  
Rudely—the verse being as the mood it paints.

I strip my mind bare—whose first elements  
I shall unveil—not as they struggled forth



## PAULINE

In infancy, nor as they now exist,  
That I am grown above them, and can rule them,  
But in that middle stage when they were full,  
Yet ere I had disposed them to my will;  
And then I shall show how these elements  
Produced my present state, and what it is.

I am made up of an intensest life,  
Of a most clear idea of consciousness  
Of self—distinct from all its qualities,  
From all affections, passions, feelings, powers;  
And thus far it exists, if tracked in all,  
But linked in me, to self-supremacy,  
Existing as a centre to all things,  
Most potent to create, and rule, and call  
Upon all things to minister to it;  
And to a principle of restlessness  
Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel, all—  
This is myself; and I should thus have been,  
Though gifted lower than the meanest soul.

And of my powers, one springs up to save  
From utter death a soul with such desires  
Confined to clay—which is the only one  
Which marks me—an imagination which  
Has been an angel to me—coming not  
In fitful visions, but beside me ever,  
And never failing me; so tho' my mind  
Forgets not—not a shred of life forgets—  
Yet I can take a secret pride in calling  
The dark past up—to quell it regally.

A mind like this must dissipate itself,  
But I have always had one lode-star; now,  
As I look back, I see that I have wasted,  
Or progressed as I looked toward that star—  
A need, a trust, a yearning after God,  
A feeling I have analysed but late,  
But it existed, and was reconciled  
With a neglect of all I deemed his laws,

## PAULINE

Which yet, when seen in others, I abhorred.  
I felt as one beloved, and so shut in  
From fear—and thence I date my trust in signs  
And omens—for I saw God every where;  
And I can only lay it to the fruit  
Of a sad after-time that I could doubt  
Even his being—having always felt  
His presence—never acting from myself,  
Still trusting in a hand that leads me through  
All dangers; and this feeling still has fought  
Against my weakest reason and resolves.

And I can love nothing—and this dull truth  
Has come the last—but sense supplies a love  
Encircling me and mingling with my life.

These make myself—for I have sought in vain  
To trace how they were formed by circumstance,  
For I still find them—turning my wild youth  
Where they alone displayed themselves, converting  
All objects to their use—now see their course!

They came to me in my first dawn of life,  
Which passed alone with wisest ancient books,  
All halo-girt with fancies of my own,  
And I myself went with the tale—a god,  
Wandering after beauty—or a giant,  
Standing vast in the sunset—an old hunter,  
Talking with gods—or a high-crested chief,  
Sailing with troops of friends to Tenedos;—  
I tell you, nought has ever been so clear  
As the place, the time, the fashion of those lives.  
I had not seen a work of lofty art,  
Nor woman's beauty, nor sweet nature's face,  
Yet, I say, never morn broke clear as those  
On the dim clustered isles in the blue sea:  
The deep groves, and white temples, and wet caves—  
And nothing ever will surprise me now—  
Who stood besides the naked Swift-footed,  
Who bound my forehead with Proserpine's hair.

## PAULINE

An' strange it is, that I who could so dream,  
Should e'er have stooped to aim at aught beneath—  
Aught low, or painful, but I never doubted;  
So as I grew, I rudely shaped my life  
To my immediate wants, yet strong beneath  
Was a vague sense of power folded up—  
A sense that tho' those shadowy times were past,  
Their spirit dwelt in me, and I should rule.

Then came a pause, and long restraint chained down  
My soul, till it was changed. I lost myself,  
And were it not that I so loathe that time,  
I could recall how first I learned to turn  
My mind against itself; and the effects,  
In deeds for which remorse were vain, as for  
The wanderings of delirious dream; yet thence  
Came cunning, envy, falsehood, which so long  
Have spotted me—at length I was restored,  
Yet long the influence remained; and nought  
But the still life I led, apart from all,  
Which left my soul to seek its old delights,  
Could e'er have brought me thus far back to peace.  
As peace returned, I sought out some pursuit:  
And song rose—no new impulse—but the one  
With which all others best could be combined.  
My life has not been that of those whose heaven  
Was lampless, save where poesy shone out;  
But as a clime, where glittering mountain-tops,  
And glancing sea, and forests steeped in light,  
Give back reflected the far-flashing sun;  
For music, (which is earnest of a heaven,  
Seeing we know emotions strange by it,  
Not else to be revealed,) is as a voice,  
A low voice calling Fancy, as a friend,  
To the green woods in the gay summer time.  
And she fills all the way with dancing shapes,  
Which have made painters pale; and they go on  
While stars look at them, and winds call to them,  
As they leave life's path for the twilight world,  
Where the dead gather. This was not at first,

## PAULINE

For I scarce knew what I would do. I had  
No wish to paint, no yearning—but I sang.

And first I sang, as I in dream have seen,  
Music wait on a lyrist for some thought,  
Yet singing to herself until it came.  
I turned to those old times and scenes, where all  
That's beautiful had birth for me, and made  
Rude verses on them all; and then I paused—  
I had done nothing, so I sought to know  
What mind had yet achieved. No fear was mine  
As I gazed on the works of mighty bards,  
In the first joy at finding my own thoughts  
Recorded, and my powers exemplified,  
And feeling their aspirings were my own.  
And then I first explored passion and mind;  
And I began afresh; I rather sought  
To rival what I wondered at, than form  
Creations of my own; so much was light  
Lent back by others, yet much was my own.

I paused again—a change was coming on,  
I was no more a boy—the past was breaking  
Before the coming, and like fever worked.  
I first thought on myself—and here my powers  
Burst out. I dreamed not of restraint, but gazed  
On all things: schemes and systems went and came,  
And I was proud (being vainest of the weak),  
In wandering o'er them, to seek out some one  
To be my own; as one should wander o'er  
The white way for a star.

On one, whom praise of mine would not offend,  
Who was as calm as beauty—being such  
Unto mankind as thou to me, Pauline,  
Believing in them, and devoting all  
His soul's strength to their winning back to peace;  
Who sent forth hopes and longings for their sake,  
Clothed in all passion's melodies, which first  
Caught me, and set me, as to a sweet task,

## PAULINE

To gather every breathing of his songs.  
And woven with them there were words, which  
seemed

A key to a new world; the muttering  
Of angels, of some thing unguessed by man.  
How my heart beat, as I went on, and found  
Much there! I felt my own mind had conceived,  
But there living and burning; soon the whole  
Of his conceptions dawned on me; their praise  
Is in the tongues of men; men's brows are high  
When his name means a triumph and a pride;  
So my weak hands may well forbear to dim  
What then seemed my bright fate: I threw myself  
To meet it. I was vowed to liberty,  
Men were to be as gods, and earth as heaven.  
And I—ah! what a life was mine to be,  
My whole soul rose to meet it. Now, Pauline,  
I shall go mad if I recall that time.

O let me look back, e'er I leave for ever  
The time, which was an hour, that one waits  
For a fair girl, that comes a withered hag.  
And I was lonely,—far from woods and fields,  
And amid dullest sights, who should be loose  
As a stag—yet I was full of joy—who lived  
With Plato—and who had the key to life.  
And I had dimly shaped my first attempt,  
And many a thought did I build up on thought,  
As the wild bee hangs cell to cell—in vain;  
For I must still go on: my mind rests not.

'Twas in my plan to look on real life,  
Which was all new to me; my theories  
Were firm, so I left them, to look upon  
Men, and their cares, and hopes, and fears, and joys;  
And, as I pondered on them all, I sought  
How best life's end might be attained—an end  
Comprising every joy. I deeply mused.

And suddenly, without heart-wreck, I awoke  
As from a dream—I said. 'twas beautiful,



## PAULINE

Yet but a dream; and so adieu to it.  
As some world-wanderer sees in a far meadow  
Strange towers, and walled gardens, thick with trees  
Where singing goes on, and delicious mirth,  
And laughing fairy creatures peeping over,  
And on the morrow, when he comes to live  
For ever by those springs, and trees, fruit-flushed  
And fairy bowers—all his search is vain.

Well I remember . . .  
First went my hopes of perfecting mankind,  
And faith in them—then freedom in itself,  
And virtue in itself—and then my motives' ends,  
And powers and loves; and human love went last.  
I felt this no decay, because new powers  
Rose as old feelings left—wit, mockery,  
And happiness; for I had oft been sad,  
Mistrusting my resolves: but now I cast  
Hope joyously away—I laughed and said,  
“No more of this”—I must not think; at length  
I look'd again to see how all went on.

My powers were greater—as some temple seemed  
My soul, where nought is changed, and incense rolls  
Around the altar—only God is gone,  
And some dark spirit sitteth in his seat!  
So I passed through the temple; and to me  
Knelt troops of shadows; and they cried, “Hail, king!  
“We serve thee now, and thou shalt serve no more!  
“Call on us, prove us, let us worship thee!”  
And I said, “Are ye strong—let fancy bear me  
“Far from the past.”—And I was borne away  
As Arab birds float sleeping in the wind,  
O'er deserts, towers, and forests, I being calm;  
And I said, “I have nursed up energies,  
“They will prey on me.” And a band knelt low,  
And cried, “Lord, we are here, and we will make  
“A way for thee—in thine appointed life  
“O look on us!” And I said, “Ye will worship  
“Me; but my heart must worship too.” They  
shouted,

## PAULINE

“Thyself—thou art our king!” So I stood there  
Smiling \* \* \* \* \*

And buoyant and rejoicing was the spirit  
With which I looked out how to end my days;  
I felt once more myself—my powers were mine;  
I found that youth or health so lifted me,  
That, spite of all life's vanity, no grief  
Came nigh me—I must ever be light-hearted;  
And that this feeling was the only veil  
Betwixt me and despair: so if age came,  
I should be as a wreck linked to a soul.  
Yet fluttering, or mind-broken, and aware  
Of my decay. So a long summer morn  
Found me; and e'er noon came, I had resolved  
No age should come on me, ere youth's hopes went,  
For I would wear myself out—like that morn  
Which wasted not a sunbeam—every joy  
I would make mine, and die; and thus I sought  
To chain my spirit down, which I had fed  
With thoughts of fame. I said, the troubled life  
Of genius seen so bright when working forth  
Some trusted end, seems sad, when all in vain—  
Most sad, when men have parted with all joy  
For their wild fancy's sake, which waited first,  
As an obedient spirit, when delight  
Came not with her alone, but alters soon,  
Coming darkened, seldom, hasting to depart,  
Leaving a heavy darkness and warm tears.

But I shall never lose her; she will live  
Brighter for such seclusion—I but catch  
A hue, a glance of what I sing; so pain  
Is linked with pleasure, for I ne'er may tell  
The radiant sights which dazzle me; but now  
They shall be all my own, and let them fade  
Untold—others shall rise as fair, as fast.  
And when all's done, the few dim gleams transferred,—

## PAULINE

(For a new thought sprung up—that it were well  
To leave all shadowy hopes, and weave such lays  
As would encircle me with praise and love;  
So I should not die utterly—I should bring  
One branch from the gold forest, like the night  
Of old tales, witnessing I had been there,)—  
And when all's done, how vain seems e'en success,  
And all the influence poets have o'er men!  
'Tis a fine thing that one, weak as myself,  
Should sit in his lone room, knowing the words  
He utters in his solitude shall move  
Men like a swift wind—that tho' he be forgotten,  
Fair eyes shall glisten when his beauteous dreams  
Of love come true in happier frames than his.  
Ay, the still night brought thoughts like these, but

### BOB

Came, and the mockery again laughed out  
At hollow praises, and smiles, almost sneers;  
And my soul's idol seemed to whisper me  
To dwell with him and his unhonoured name—  
And I well knew my spirit, that would be  
First in the struggle, and again would make  
All bow to it; and I would sink again.

And then know that this curse will come on us,  
To see our idols perish—we may wither,  
Nor marvel—we are clay; but our low fate  
Should not extend them, whom trustingly  
We sent before into Time's yawning gulf,  
To face what e'er may lurk in darkness there—  
To see the painter's glory pass, and feel  
Sweet music move us not as once, or worst,  
To see decaying wits ere the frail body  
Decays. Nought makes me trust in love so really,  
As the delight of the contented lowness  
With which I gaze on souls I'd keep for ever  
In beauty—I'd be sad to equal them;  
I'd feed their fame e'en from my heart's best blood,  
Withering unseen, that they might flourish still.

## PAULINE

Pauline, my sweet friend, thou dost not forget  
How this mood swayed me, when thou first wert mine,  
When I had set myself to live this life,  
Defying all opinion. Ere thou camest  
I was most happy, sweet, for old delights  
Had come like birds again; music, my life,  
I nourished more than ever, and old lore  
Loved for itself, and all it shows—the king  
Treading the purple calmly to his death,  
—While round him, like the clouds of eve, all dusk,  
The giant shades of fate, silently flitting,  
Pile the dim outline of the coming doom,  
—And him sitting alone in blood, while friends  
Are hunting far in the sunshine; and the boy,  
With his white breast and brow and clustering curls  
Streaked with his mother's blood, and striving hard  
To tell his story ere his reason goes.  
And when I loved thee, as I've loved so oft,  
Thou lovedst me, and I wondered, and looked in  
My heart to find some feeling like such love,  
Believing I was still what I had been;  
And soon I found all faith had gone from me,  
And the late glow of life—changing like clouds,  
'Twas not the morn-blush widening into day,  
But evening, coloured by the dying sun  
While darkness is quick hastening:—I will tell  
My state as though 'twere none of mine—despair  
Cannot come near me—thus it is with me.  
Souls alter not, and mine must progress still;  
And this I knew not when I flung away  
My youth's chief aims. I ne'er supposed the loss  
Of what few I retained; for no resource  
Awaits me—now behold the change of all.  
I cannot chain my soul, it will not rest  
In its clay prison; this most narrow sphere—  
It has strange powers, and feelings, and desires,  
Which I cannot account for, nor explain,  
But which I stifle not, being bound to trust  
All feelings equally—to hear all sides:  
Yet I cannot indulge them, and they live,

## PAULINE

Referring to some state or life unknown. . . .

My selfishness is satiated not,  
It wears me like a flame; my hunger for  
All pleasure, howso'er minute, is pain;  
I envy—how I envy him whose mind  
Turns with its energies to some one end!  
To elevate a sect, or a pursuit,  
However mean—so my still baffled hopes  
Seek out abstractions; I would have but one  
Delight on earth, so it were wholly mine;  
One rapture all my soul could fill—and this  
Wild feeling places me in dream afar,  
In some wide country, where the eye can see  
No end to the far hills and dales bestrewn  
With shining towers and dwellings. I grow mad  
Well-nigh, to know not one abode but holds  
Some pleasure—for my soul could grasp them all,  
But must remain with this vile form. I look  
With hope to age at last, which quenching much,  
May let me concentrate the sparks it spares.

This restlessness of passion meets in me  
A craving after knowledge: the sole proof  
Of a commanding will is in that power  
Repressed; for I beheld it in its dawn,  
That sleepless harpy, with its budding wings,  
And I considered whether I should yield  
All hopes and fears, to live alone with it,  
Finding a recompence in its wild eyes;  
And when I found that I should perish so,  
I bade its wild eyes close from me for ever;—  
And I am left alone with my delights,—  
So it lies in me a chained thing—still ready  
To serve me, if I loose its slightest bond—  
I cannot but be proud of my bright slave.

And thus I know this earth is not my sphere,  
For I cannot so narrow me, but that  
I still exceed it; in their elements

## PAULINE

My love would pass my reason—but since here  
Love must receive its object from this earth,  
While reason will be chainless, the few truths  
Caught from its wanderings have sufficed to quell  
All love below;—then what must be that love  
Which, with the object it demands, would quell  
Reason, tho' it soared with the seraphim?  
No—what I feel may pass all human love,  
Yet fall far short of what my love should be;  
And yet I seem more warped in this than aught  
For here myself stands out more hideously.  
I can forget myself in friendship, fame,  
Or liberty, or love of mighty souls.

. . . . .

But I begin to know what thing hate is—  
To sicken, and to quiver, and grow white,  
And I myself have furnished its first prey.  
All my sad weaknesses, this wavering will,  
This selfishness, this still decaying frame . . .  
But I must never grieve while I can pass  
Far from such thoughts—as now—Andromeda!  
And she is with me—years roll, I shall change,  
But change can touch her not—so beautiful  
With her dark eyes, earnest and still, and hair  
Lifted and spread by the salt-sweeping breeze;  
And one red-beam, all the storm leaves in heaven,  
Resting upon her eyes and face and hair,  
As she awaits the snake on the wet beach,  
By the dark rock, and the white wave just breaking  
At her feet; quite naked and alone,—a thing  
You doubt not, nor fear for, secure that God  
Will come in thunder from the stars to save her.  
Let it pass—I will call another change.  
I will be gifted with a wond'rous soul,  
Yet sunk by error to men's sympathy,  
And in the wane of life; yet only so  
As to call up their fears, and there shall come  
A time requiring youth's best energies;  
And straight I fling age, sorrow, sickness off,

## PAULINE

And I rise triumphing over my decay.

And thus it is that I supply the chasm  
'Twixt what I am and all that I would be.  
But then to know nothing—to hope for nothing—  
To seize on life's dull joys from a strange fear,  
Lest, losing them, all's lost, and nought remains.

There's some vile juggle with my reason here—  
I feel I but explain to my own loss  
These impulses—they live no less the same.  
Liberty! what though I despair—my blood  
Rose not at a slave's name prouder than now,  
And sympathy obscured by sophistries.  
Why have not I sought refuge in myself,  
But for the woes I saw and could not stay—  
And love!—do I not love thee, my Pauline?

I cherish prejudice, lest I be left  
Utterly loveless—witness this belief  
In poets, tho' sad change has come there too;  
No more I leave myself to follow them:  
Unconsciously I measure me by them.  
Let me forget it; and I cherish most  
My love of England—how her name—a word  
Of her's in a strange tongue makes my heart beat! . . .

Pauline, I could do any thing—not now—  
All's fever—but when calm shall come again—  
I am prepared—I have made life my own—  
I would not be content with all the change  
One frame should feel—but I have gone in thought  
Thro' all conjuncture—I have lived all life  
When it is most alive—where strangest fate  
New shapes it past surmise—the tales of men  
Bit by some curse—or in the grasp of doom  
Half-visible and still increasing round,  
Or crowning their wide being's general aim. . . .



## PAULINE

These are wild fancies, but I feel, sweet friend,  
As one breathing his weakness to the ear  
Of pitying angel—dear as a winter flower;  
A slight flower growing alone, and offering  
Its frail cup of three leaves to the cold sun,  
Yet joyous and confiding, like the triumph  
Of a child—and why am I not worthy thee?

. . . . .

I can live all the life of plants, and gaze  
Drowsily on the bees that flit and play,  
Or bare my breast for sunbeams which will kill,  
Or open in the night of sounds, to look  
For the dim stars; I can mount with the bird,  
Leaping airily his pyramid of leaves  
And twisted boughs of some tall mountain tree,  
Or rise cheerfully springing to the heavens—  
Or like a fish breathe in the morning air  
In the misty sun-warm water—or with flowers  
And trees can smile in light at the sinking sun,  
Just as the storm comes—as a girl would look  
On a departing lover—most serene.

Pauline, come with me—see how I could build  
A home for us, out of the world; in thought—  
I am inspired—come with me, Pauline!

Night, and one single ridge of narrow path  
Between the sullen river and the woods  
Waving and muttering—for the moonless night  
Has shaped them into images of life,  
Like the upraising of the giant-ghosts,  
Looking on earth to know how their sons fare.  
Thou art so close by me, the roughest swell  
Of wind in the tree-tops hides not the panting  
Of thy soft breasts; no—we will pass to morning—  
Morning—the rocks, and vallies, and old woods.  
How the sun brightens in the mist, and here,—  
Half in the air, like creatures of the place,

## PAULINE

Trusting the element—living on high boughs  
That swing in the wind—look at the golden spray,  
Flung from the foam-sheet of the cataract,  
Amid the broken rocks—shall we stay here  
With the wild hawks?—no, ere the hot noon come  
Dive we down—safe;—see this our new retreat  
Walled in with a sloped mound of matted shrubs,  
Dark, tangled, old and green—still sloping down  
To a small pool whose waters lie asleep  
Amid the trailing boughs turned water plants  
And tall trees over-arch to keep us in,  
Breaking the sunbeams into emerald shafts,  
And in the dreamy water one small group  
Of two or three strange trees are got together,  
Wondering at all around—as strange beasts herd  
Together far from their own land—all wildness—  
No turf nor moss, for boughs and plants pave all,  
And tongues of bank go shelving in the waters,  
Where the pale-throated snake reclines his head,  
And old grey stones lie making eddies there;  
The wild mice cross them dry-shod—deeper in—  
Shut thy soft eyes—now look—still deeper in:  
This is the very heart of the woods—all round,  
Mountain-like, heaped above us; yet even here  
One pond of water gleams—far off the river  
Sweeps like a sea, barred out from land; but one—  
One thin clear sheet has over-leaped and wound  
Into this silent depth, which gained, it lies  
Still, as but let by sufferance; the trees bend  
O'er it as wild men watch a sleeping girl,  
And thro' their roots long creeping plants stretch out  
Their twined hair, steeped and sparkling; farther on,  
Tall rushes and thick flag-knots have combined  
To narrow it; so, at length, a silver thread  
It winds, all noiselessly, thro' the deep wood,  
Till thro' a cleft way, thro' the moss and stone,  
It joins its parent-river with a shout.  
Up for the glowing day—leave the old woods:  
See, they part, like a ruined arch, the sky!  
Nothing but sky appears, so close the root

## PAULINE

And grass of the hill-top level with the air—  
Blue sunny air, where a great cloud floats, laden  
With light, like a dead whale that white birds pick,  
Floating away in the sun in some north sea.  
Air, air—fresh life-blood—thin and searching air—  
The clear, dear breath of God, that loveth us :  
Where small birds reel and winds take their delight.  
Water is beautiful, but not like air.  
See, where the solid azure waters lie,  
Made as of thickened air, and down below,  
The fern-ranks, like a forest spread themselves,  
As tho' each pore could feel the element ;  
Where the quick glancing serpent winds his way—  
Float with me there, Pauline, but not like air.  
Down the hill—stop—a clump of trees, see, set  
On a heap of rocks, which look o'er the far plains,  
And envious climbing shrubs would mount to rest,  
And peer from their spread boughs. There they wave,  
looking  
At the muleteers, who whistle as they go  
To the merry chime of their morning bells, and all  
The little smoking cots, and fields, and banks,  
And copses, bright in the sun ; my spirit wanders.  
Hedge-rows for me—still, living, hedge-rows, where  
The bushes close, and clasp above, and keep  
Thought in—I am concentrated—I feel ;—  
But my soul saddens when it looks beyond ;  
I cannot be immortal, nor taste all.  
O God ! where does this tend—these struggling aims ! \*  
What would I have ? what is this “sleep,” which seems  
To bound all ? can there be a “waking” point

\* Je crains bien que mon pauvre ami ne soit pas toujours parfaitement compris dans ce qui reste à lire de cet étrange fragment—mais il est moins propre que tout autre à éclaircir ce qui de sa nature ne peut jamais être que songe et confusion. D'ailleurs je ne sais trop si en cherchant à mieux co-ordonner certaines parties l'on ne courrait pas le risque de nuire au seul mérite auquel une production si singulière peut prétendre—celui de donner une idée assez précise du genre qu'elle n'a fait que ébaucher.—Ce début sans prétention, ce remuement des passions qui va d'abord en accroissant et puis s'appaise par degrés, ces élans de l'ame, ce retour soudain sur soi-même.—Et par dessus tout, la tournure d'esprit toute particulière de mon

## PAULINE

Of crowning life? The soul would never rule—  
It would be first in all things—it would have  
Its utmost pleasure filled,—but that complete  
Commanding for commanding sickens it.  
The last point that I can trace is, rest beneath  
Some better essence than itself—in weakness;  
This is “myself”—not what I think should be,  
And what is that I hunger for but God?  
My God, my God! let me for once look on thee  
As tho’ nought else existed : we alone.  
And as creation crumbles, my soul’s spark  
Expands till I can say, “Even from myself  
“I need thee, and I feel thee, and I love thee;  
“I do not plead my rapture in thy works  
“For love of thee—or that I feel as one  
“Who cannot die—but there is that in me  
“Which turns to thee, which loves, or which should  
love.”

Why have I girt myself with this hell-dress?  
Why have I laboured to put out my life?  
Is it not in my nature to adore,  
And e’en for all my reason do I not

ami rendent les changemens presque impossibles. Les raisons qu’il fait valoir ailleurs, et d’autres encore plus puissantes, ont fait trouver grâce à mes yeux pour cet écrit qu’autrement je lui eusse conseillé de jeter au feu —Je n’en crois pas moins au grand principe de toute composition—à ce principe de Shakespeare, de Raffaele, de Beethoven, d’où il suit que la concentration des idées est dûe bien plus à leur conception, qu’à leur mise en execution . . . j’ai tout lieu de craindre que la première de ces qualités ne soit encore étrangère à mon ami—et je doute tort qu’un redoublement de travail lui fasse acquérir la seconde. Le mieux serait de brûler ceci; mais que faire?

Je crois que dans ce qui suit il fait allusion à un certain examen qu’il fit autrefois de l’âme ou plutôt de son âme, pour découvrir la suite des objets auxquels il lui serait possible d’atteindre, et dont chacun une fois obtenu devait former une espèce de plateau d’où l’on pouvait apercevoir d’autres buts, d’autres projets, d’autres jouissances qui, à leur tour, devaient être surmontés. Il en résultait que l’oubli et le sommeil devaient tout terminer. Cette idée que je ne saisis pas parfaitement lui est peut-être aussi intelligible qu’à moi.

PAULINE

## PAULINE

Feel him, and thank him, and pray to him?—*Now*.  
Can I forego the trust that he loves me?  
Do I not feel a love which only ONE . . .  
O thou pale form, so dimly seen, deep-eyed,  
I have denied thee calmly—do I not  
Pant when I read of thy consummate deeds,  
And burn to see thy calm, pure truths out-flash  
The brightest gleams of earth's philosophy?  
Do I not shake to hear aught question thee? . . .

If I am erring save me, madden me,  
Take from me powers, and pleasures—let me die  
Ages, so I see thee: I am knit round  
As with a charm, by sin and lust and pride,  
Yet tho' my wandering dreams have seen all shapes  
Of strange delight, oft have I stood by thee—  
Have I been keeping lonely watch with thee,  
In the damp night by weeping Olivet,  
Or leaning on thy bosom, proudly less—  
Or dying with thee on the lonely cross—  
Or witnessing thy bursting from the tomb!

A mortal, sin's familiar friend doth here  
Avow that he will give all earth's reward,  
But to believe and humbly teach the faith,  
In suffering, and poverty, and shame,  
Only believing he is not unloved. . . .

And now, my Pauline, I am thine for ever!  
I feel the spirit which has buoyed me up  
Deserting me: and old shades gathering on;  
Yet while its last light waits, I would say much,  
And chiefly, I am glad that I have said  
That love which I have ever felt for thee,  
But seldom told; our hearts so beat together,  
That speech is mockery, but when dark hours come;  
And I feel sad; and thou, sweet, deem'st it strange;  
A sorrow moves me, thou canst not remove.  
Look on this lay I dedicate to thee,

## PAULINE

Which thro' thee I began, and which I end,  
Collecting the last gleams to strive to tell  
That I am thine, and more than ever now—  
That I am sinking fast—yet tho' I sink,  
No less I feel that thou hast brought me bliss,  
And that I still may hope to win it back.  
Thou know'st, dear friend, I could not think all calm,  
For wild dreams followed me, and bore me off,  
And all was indistinct. Ere one was caught  
Another glanced: so dazzled by my wealth,  
Knowing not which to leave nor which to choose,  
For all my thoughts so floated, nought was fixed—  
And then thou said'st a perfect bard was one  
Who shadowed out the stages of all life,  
And so thou badest me tell this my first stage;—  
'Tis done: and even now I feel all dim the shift  
Of thought. These are my last thoughts; I discern  
Faintly immortal life, and truth, and good.  
And why thou must be mine is, that e'en now,  
In the dim hush of night—that I have done—  
With fears and sad forebodings: I look thro'  
And say, "E'en at the last I have her still,  
"With her delicious eyes as clear as heaven,  
"When rain in a quick shower has beat down mist,  
"And clouds float white in the sun like broods of  
swans."

How the blood lies upon her cheek, all spread  
As thinned by kisses; only in her lips  
It wells and pulses like a living thing,  
And her neck looks, like marble misted o'er  
With love-breath, a dear thing to kiss and love,  
Standing beneath me—looking out to me,  
As I might kill her and be loved for it.

Love me—love me, Pauline, love nought but me;  
Leave me not. All these words are wild and weak,  
Believe them not, Pauline. I stooped so low  
But to behold thee purer by my side,  
To show thou art my breath—my life—a last

## PAULINE

Resource—an extreme want: never believe  
Aught better could so look to thee, nor seek  
Again the world of good thoughts left for me.  
There were bright troops of undiscovered suns.  
Each equal in their radiant course. There were  
Clusters of far fair isles, which ocean kept  
For his own joy, and his waves broke on them  
Without a choice. And there was a dim crowd  
Of visions, each a part of the dim whole.  
And a star left his peers and came with peace  
Upon a storm, and all eyes pined for him.  
And one isle harboured a sea-beaten ship,  
And the crew wandered in its bowers, and plucked  
Its fruits, and gave up all their hopes for home.  
And one dream came to a pale poet's sleep,  
And he said, "I am singled out by God,  
"No sin must touch me." I am very weak,  
But what I would express is,—Leave me not,  
Still sit by me—with beating breast, and hair  
Loosened—watching earnest by my side,  
Turning my books, or kissing me when I  
Look up—like summer wind. Be still to me  
A key to music's mystery, when mind fails,  
A reason, a solution and a clue.  
You see I have thrown off my prescribed rules:  
I hope in myself—and hope, and pant, and love—  
You'll find me better—know me more than when  
You loved me as I was. Smile not; I have  
Much yet to gladden you—to dawn on you.

No more of the past—I'll look within no more—  
I have too trusted to my own wild wants—  
Too trusted to myself—to intuition.  
Draining the wine alone in the still night,  
And seeing how—as gathering films arose,  
As by an inspiration life seemed bare  
And grinning in its vanity, and ends  
Hard to be dreamed of, stared at me as fixed,  
And others suddenly became all foul,



## PAULINE

As a fair witch turned an old hag at night.  
No more of this—we will go hand in hand,  
I will go with thee, even as a child,  
Looking no further than thy sweet commands.  
And thou hast chosen where this life shall be—  
The land which gave me thee shall be our home,  
Where nature lies all wild amid her lakes  
And snow-swathed mountains, and vast pines all girt  
With ropes of snow—where nature lies all bare,  
Suffering none to view her but a race  
Most stunted and deformed—like the mute dwarfs  
Which wait upon a naked Indian queen.  
And there (the time being when the heavens are thick  
With storms) I'll sit with thee while thou dost sing  
Thy native songs, gay as a desert bird  
Who crieth as he flies for perfect joy,  
Or telling me old stories of dead knights.  
Or I will read old lays to thee—how she,  
The fair pale sister, went to her chill grave  
With power to love, and to be loved, and live.  
Or we will go together, like twin gods  
Of the infernal world, with scented lamp  
Over the dead—to call and to awake—  
Over the unshaped images which lie  
Within my mind's cave—only leaving all  
That tells of the past doubts. So when spring comes,  
And sunshine comes again like an old smile,  
And the fresh waters, and awakened birds,  
And budding woods await us—I shall be  
Prepared, and we will go and think again,  
And all old loves shall come to us—but changed  
As some sweet thought which harsh words veiled  
before;  
Feeling God loves us, and that all that errs,  
Is a strange dream which death will dissipate;  
And then when I am firm we'll seek again  
My own land, and again I will approach  
My old designs, and calmly look on all  
The works of my past weakness, as one views  
Some scene where danger met him long before

## PAULINE

Ah! that such pleasant life should be but dreamed!

But whate'er come of it—and tho' it fade,  
And tho' ere the cold morning all be gone  
As it will be;—tho' music wait for me,  
And fair eyes and bright wine, laughing like sin:  
Which steals back softly on a soul half saved;  
And I be first to deny all, and despise  
This verse, and these intents which seem so fair:  
Still this is all my own, this moment's pride,  
No less I make an end in perfect joy.  
E'en in my brightest time, a lurking fear  
Possessed me. I well knew my weak resolves,  
I felt the witchery that makes mind sleep  
Over its treasures—as one half afraid  
To make his riches definite—but now  
These feelings shall not utterly be lost,  
I shall not know again that nameless care,  
Lest leaving all undone in youth, some new  
And undreamed end reveal itself too late:  
For this song shall remain to tell for ever,  
That when I lost all hope of such a change  
Suddenly Beauty rose on me again.  
No less I make an end in perfect joy,  
For I, having thus again been visited,  
Shall doubt not many another bliss awaits,  
And tho' this weak soul sink, and darkness come.  
Some little word shall light it up again,  
And I shall see all clearer and love better;  
I shall again go o'er the tracts of thought,  
As one who has a right; and I shall live  
With poets—calmer—purer still each time,  
And beauteous shapes will come to me again,  
And unknown secrets will be trusted me,  
Which were not mine when wavering—but now  
I shall be priest and lover, as of old.

Sun-treader, I believe in God, and truth,  
And love; and as one just escaped from death  
Would bind himself in bands of friends to feel

## PAULINE

He lives indeed—so, I would lean on thee;  
Thou must be ever with me—most in gloom  
When such shall come—but chiefly when I die,  
For I seem dying, as one going in the dark  
To fight a giant—and live thou for ever,  
And be to all what thou hast been to me—  
All in whom this wakes pleasant thoughts of me.  
Know my last state is happy—free from doubt,  
Or touch of fear. Love me and wish me well!

RICHMOND,  
*October 22, 1832.*



# PARACELSUS

INSCRIBED TO  
AMÉDÉE DE RIPERT-MONCLAR

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE FRIEND

R.B.

London : March 15, 1835.

# PARACELSUS

## PERSONS

AUREOLUS PARACELSUS  
FESTUS and MICHAL, his friends  
APRILE, an Italian Poet

## I. PARACELSUS ASPIRES

SCENE.—*Würzburg—a garden in the environs.* 1512

FESTUS, PARACELSUS, MICHAL

*Par.* Come close to me, dear friends; still closer;  
thus!

Close to the heart which, though long time roll by  
Ere it again beat quicker, pressed to yours,  
As now it beats—perchance a long, long time—  
At least henceforth your memories shall make  
Quiet and fragrant as befits their home.  
Nor shall my memory want a home in yours—  
Alas, that it requires too well such free  
Forgiving love as shall embalm it there!  
For if you would remember me aright—  
As I was born to be—you must forget  
All fitful, strange, and moody waywardness  
Which e'er confused my better spirit, to dwell  
Only on moments such as these, dear friends!  
—My heart no truer, but my words and ways  
More true to it: as Michal, some months hence,  
Will say, "this autumn was a pleasant time,"  
For some few sunny days; and overlook  
Its bleak wind, hankering after pining leaves.



## PARACELSUS

Autumn would fain be sunny—I would look  
Liker my nature's truth; and both are frail,  
And both beloved for all their frailty!

*Mich.*

Aureole!

*Par.* Drop by drop!—she is weeping like a child!  
Not so! I am content—more than content—  
Nay, Autumn wins you best by this its mute  
Appeal to sympathy for its decay!  
Look up, sweet Michal, nor esteem the less  
Your stained and drooping vines their grapes bow  
down,

Nor blame those creaking trees bent with their fruit,  
That apple-tree with a rare after-birth  
Of peeping blooms sprinkled its wealth among!  
Then for the winds—what wind that ever raved  
Shall vex that ash that overlooks you both,  
So proud it wears its berries? Ah! at length,  
The old smile meet for her, the lady of this  
Sequestered nest! This kingdom, limited  
Alone by one old populous green wall,  
Tenanted by the ever-busy flies,  
Grey crickets, and shy lizards, and quick spiders,  
Each family of the silver-threaded moss—  
Which, look through, near, this way, and it appears  
A stubble-field, or a cane-brake—a marsh  
Of bulrush whitening in the sun: laugh now!  
Fancy the crickets, each one in his house,  
Looking out, wondering at the world—or best,  
Yon painted snail, with his gay shell of dew,  
Travelling to see the glossy balls high up  
Hung by the caterpillar, like gold lamps!

*Mich.* In truth we have lived carelessly and well!

*Par.* And shall, my perfect pair—each, trust me,  
born

For the other; nay, your very hair, when mixed,  
Is of one hue. For where save in this nook  
Shall you two walk, when I am far away,  
And wish me prosperous fortune? Stay! . . . Whene'er  
That plant shall wave its tangles lightly and softly,  
As a queen's languid and imperial arm

## PARACELSUS

Which scatters crowns among her lovers, you  
Shall be reminded to predict to me  
Some great success! Ah, see! the sun sinks broad  
Behind St. Saviour's: wholly gone, at last!

*Fest.* Now, Aureole, stay those wandering eyes  
awhile!

You are ours to-night at least; and while you spoke  
Of Michal and her tears, the thought came back  
That none could leave what he so seemed to love:  
But that last look destroys my dream—that look!  
As if, where'er you gazed, there stood a star!  
How far was Würzburg, with its church and spire,  
And garden-walls, and all things they contain,  
From that look's far alighting?

*Par.* I but spoke  
And looked alike from simple joy, to see  
The beings I love best, shut in so well  
From all rude chances like to be my lot,  
That, when afar, my weary spirit,—disposed  
To lose awhile its care in soothing thoughts  
Of them, their pleasant features, looks, and words,—  
Need never hesitate, nor apprehend  
Encroaching trouble may have reached them too,  
Nor have recourse to Fancy's busy aid  
To fashion even a wish in their behalf  
Beyond what they possess already here;  
But, unobstructed, may at once forget  
Itself in them, assured how well they are.  
Beside, this Festus knows, he thinks me one  
Whom quiet and its charms attract in vain,  
One scarce aware of all the joys I quit,  
Too fill'd with airy hopes to make account  
Of soft delights which free hearts garner up:  
Whereas, behold how much our sense of all  
That's beauteous proves alike! When Festus learns  
That every common pleasure of the world  
Affects me as himself; that I have just  
As varied appetites for joy derived  
From common things; a stake in life, in short,  
Like his; a stake which rash pursuit of aims

## PARACELSUS

That life affords not, would as soon destroy;—  
He may convince himself, that, this in view,  
I shall act well advised: and last, because,  
Though heaven and earth, and all things, were at  
stake,

Sweet Michal must not weep, our parting eve!

*Fest.* True: and the even is deepening, and we sit  
As little anxious to begin our talk

As though to-morrow I could open it

As we paced arm in arm the cheerful town

At sun-dawn; and continue it by fits

(Old Tritheim busied with his class the while)

In that dim chamber where the noon-streaks peer

Half frightened by the awful tomes around;

And here at home unbosom all the rest

From even-blush to midnight; but, to-morrow! . . .

Have I full leave to tell my inmost mind?

We two were brothers, and henceforth the world

Will rise between us:—all my freest mind?

'Tis the last night, dear Aureole!

*Par.*

Oh, say on!

Devise some test of love—some arduous feat

To be performed for you—say on! If night

Be spent the while, the better! Recall how oft

My wondrous plans, and dreams, and hopes, and fears,

Have—never wearied you . . . oh, no! . . . as I

Recall, and never vividly as now,

Your true affection, born when Einsiedeln

And its green hills were all the world to us,

And still increasing to this night, which ends

My further stay at Würzburg . . . Oh, one day

You shall be very proud! Say on, dear friends!

*Fest.* In truth? 'Tis for my proper peace, indeed,

Rather than yours; for vain all projects seem

To stay your course: I said my latest hope

Is fading even now. A story tells

Of some far embassy despatched to buy

The favour of an eastern king, and how

The gifts they offered proved but dazzling dust

Shed from the ore-beds native to his clime:

## PARACELSUS

Just so, the value of repose and love,  
I meant should tempt you, better far than I  
You seem to comprehend—and yet desist  
No whit from projects where repose nor love  
Have part.

*Par.* Once more? Alas! as I forbode!

*Fest.* A solitary briar the bank puts forth  
To save our swan's nest floating out to sea.

*Par.* Dear Festus, hear me. What is it you wish?  
That I should lay aside my heart's pursuit,  
Abandon the sole ends for which I live,  
Reject God's great commission—and so die!  
You bid me listen for your true love's sake:  
Yet how has grown that love? Even in a long  
And patent cherishing of the selfsame spirit  
It now would quell; as though a mother hoped  
To stay the lusty manhood of the child  
Once weak upon her knees. I was not born  
Informed and fearless from the first, but shrank  
From aught which marked me out apart from men:  
I would have lived their life, and died their death,  
Lost in their ranks, eluding destiny:  
But you first guided me through doubt and fear,  
Taught me to know mankind and know myself;  
And now that I am strong and full of hope,  
That, from my soul, I can reject all aims  
Save those your earnest words made plain to me;  
Now, that I touch the brink of my design,  
When I would have a triumph in their eyes,  
A glad cheer in their voices—Michal weeps,  
And Festus ponders gravely!

*Fest.* . . . When you deign  
To hear my purpose . . .

*Par.* . . . Hear it? I can say  
Beforehand all this evening's conference!  
'Tis this way, Michal, that he uses: first,  
Or he declares, or I, the leading points  
Of our best scheme of life, what is man's end,  
And what God's will—no two faiths e'er agreed  
As his with mine: next, each of us allows

## PARACELSUS

Faith should be acted on as best we may:  
Accordingly, I venture to submit  
A plan, in lack of better, for pursuing  
The path which God's will seems to authorize:  
Well—he discerns much good in it, avows  
This motive worthy, that hope plausible,  
A danger here, to be avoided—there,  
An oversight to be repaired: at last  
Our two minds go together—all the good  
Approved by him, I gladly recognize;  
All he counts bad, I thankfully discard;  
And nought forbids my looking up at last  
For some stray comfort in his cautious brow—  
When, lo! I learn that, spite of all, there lurks  
Some innate and inexplicable germ  
Of failure in my schemes; so that at last  
It all amounts to this—the sovereign proof  
That we devote ourselves to God, is seen  
In living just as though there were no God:  
A life which, prompted by the sad and blind  
Lusts of the world, Festus abhors the most—  
But which these tenets sanctify at once;  
Though to less subtle wits it seems the same,  
Consider it how they may.

*Mich.* Is it so, Festus?  
He speaks so calmly and kindly—is it so?

*Par.* Reject those glorious visions of God's love  
And man's design; laugh loud that God should send  
Vast longings to direct us; say how soon  
Power satiates these, or lust, or gold; I know  
The world's cry well, and how to answer it!  
But this ambiguous warfare . . .

*Fest.* . . . Wearies so  
That you will grant no last leave to your friend  
To urge it?—for his sake, not yours? I wish  
To send my soul in good hopes after you;  
Never to sorrow that uncertain words,  
Erringly apprehended—a new creed,  
Ill understood—begot rash trust in you,  
And shared in your undoing.

## PARACELSUS

*Par.* Choose your side:  
Hold or renounce: but meanwhile blame me not  
Because I dare to act on your own views,  
Nor shrink when they point onward, nor espy  
A peril where they most ensure success.

*Fest.* Prove that to me—but that! Prove you abide  
Within their warrant, nor presumptuous boast  
God's labour laid on you; prove, all you covet  
A mortal may expect; and, most of all,  
Prove the strange course you now affect, will lead  
To its attainment—and I bid you speed,  
Nay, count the minutes till you venture forth!  
You smile; but I had gathered from slow thought—  
Much musing on the fortunes of my friend—  
Matter I deemed could not be urged in vain:  
But it all leaves me at my need: in shreds  
And fragments I must venture what remains.

*Mich.* Ask at once, Festus, wherefore he should  
scorn . . .

*Fest.* Stay, Michal: Aureole, I speak guardedly  
And gravely, knowing well, whate'er your error,  
This is no ill-considered choice of yours—  
No sudden fancy of an ardent boy.  
Not from your own confiding words alone  
Am I aware your passionate heart long since  
Gave birth to, nourished, and at length matures  
This scheme. I will not speak of Einsiedeln,  
Where I was born your elder by some years  
Only to watch you fully from the first:  
In all beside, our mutual tasks were fixed  
Even then—'twas mine to have you in my view  
As you had your own soul and those intents  
Which filled it when, to crown your dearest wish,  
With a tumultuous heart, you left with me  
Our childhood's home to join the favoured few  
Whom, here at Würzburg, Tritheim deigns to teach  
A portion of his lore: and not the best  
Of those so favoured, whom you now despise,  
Came earnest as you came; resolved, like you,  
To grasp all, and retain all, and deserve

## PARACELSUS

By patient toil a wide renown like his.  
And this new ardour which supplants the old,  
I watched, too; 'twas significant and strange,  
In one matched to his soul's content at length  
With rivals in the search for Wisdom's prize,  
To see the sudden pause, the total change;  
From contest, the transition to repose—  
From pressing onward as his fellows pressed,  
To a blank idleness; yet most unlike  
The dull stagnation of a soul, content,  
Once foiled, to leave betimes a thriveless quest.  
That careless bearing, free from all pretence  
Even of contempt for what it ceased to seek—  
Smiling humility, praising much, yet waiving  
What it professed to praise—though not so well  
Maintained but that rare outbreaks, fierce as brief,  
Revealed the hidden scorn, as quickly curbed—  
That ostentatious show of past defeat,  
That ready acquiescence in contempt,  
I deemed no other than the letting go  
His shivered sword, of one about to spring  
Upon his foe's throat; but it was not thus:  
Not that way looked your brooding purpose then.  
For after-signs disclosed, what you confirmed,  
That you prepared to task to the uttermost  
Your strength, in furtherance of a certain aim,  
Which—while it bore the name your rivals gave  
Their own most puny efforts—was so vast  
In scope that it included their best flights,  
Combined them, and desired to gain one prize  
In place of many,—the secret of the world,  
Of man, and man's true purpose, path, and fate:  
—That you, not nursing as a mere vague dream  
This purpose, with the sages of the Past,  
Have struck upon a way to this, if all  
You trust be true, which following, heart and soul,  
You, if a man may, dare aspire to KNOW:  
And that this aim shall differ from a host  
Of aims alike in character and kind,  
Mostly in this,—to seek its own reward



## PARACELSUS

In itself only, not an alien end  
To blend therewith; no hope, nor fear, nor joy,  
Nor woe, to elsewhere move you, but this pure  
Devotion to sustain you or betray:  
Thus you aspire.

*Par.*                    You shall not state it thus:  
I should not differ from the dreamy crew  
You speak of. I profess no other share  
In the selection of my lot, than this,  
A ready answer to the will of God  
Who summons me to be his organ: all  
Whose innate strength supports them shall succeed  
No better than your sages.

*Fest.*                    Such the aim, then,  
God sets before you; and 'tis doubtless need  
That he appoint no less the way of praise  
Than the desire to praise; for, though I hold  
With you, the setting forth such praise to be  
The natural end and service of a man,  
And think such praise is best attained when man  
Attains the general welfare of his kind—  
Yet, this, the end, is not the instrument.  
Presume not to serve God apart from such  
Appointed channel as He wills shall gather  
Imperfect tributes—for that sole obedience  
Valued, perchance. He seeks not that his altars  
Blaze—careless how, so that they do but blaze.  
Suppose this, then; that God selected you  
To KNOW (heed well your answers, for my faith  
Shall meet implicitly what they affirm)  
I cannot think you dare annex to such  
Selection aught beyond a steadfast will,  
An intense hope, nor let your gifts create  
Scorn or neglect of ordinary means  
Conducive to success—make destiny  
Dispense with man's endeavour. Now dare you search  
Your inmost heart, and candidly avow  
Whether you have not rather wild desire  
For this distinction, than security  
Of its existence: whether you discern

## PARACELSUS

The path to the fulfilment of your purpose  
Clear as that purpose—and again, that purpose  
Clear as your yearning to be singled out  
For its pursuer. Dare you answer this?

*Par. (After a pause.)* No, I have nought to fear!

Who will may know

The secret'st workings of my soul. What though  
It be so?—if indeed the strong desire  
Eclipse the aim in me?—if splendour break  
Upon the outset of my path alone,  
And duskest shade succeed? What fairer seal  
Shall I require to my authentic mission  
Than this fierce energy—this instinct striving  
Because its nature is to strive?—enticed  
By the security of no broad course,  
With no success forever in its eyes!  
How know I else such glorious fate my own,  
But in the restless irresistible force  
That works within me? Is it for human will  
To institute such impulses?—still less,  
To disregard their promptings? What should I  
Do, kept among you all; your loves, your cares,  
Your life—all to be mine? Be sure that God  
Ne'er dooms to waste the strength he deigns impart!  
Ask the gier-eagle why she stoops at once  
Into the vast and unexplored abyss,  
What full-grown power informs her from the first,  
Why she not marvels, strenuously beating  
The silent boundless regions of the sky!  
Be sure they sleep not whom God needs! Nor fear  
Their holding light his charge, when every hour  
That finds that charge delayed, is a new death.  
This for the faith in which I trust; and hence  
I can abjure so well the idle arts  
These pedants strive to learn and teach; Black Arts,  
Great Works, the Secret and Sublime, forsooth—  
Let others prize: too intimate a tie  
Connects me with our God! A sullen fiend  
To do my bidding, fallen and hateful sprites  
To help me—what are these, at best, beside

## PARACELSUS

God helping, God directing everywhere,  
So that the earth shall yield her secrets up,  
And every object shall be charged to strike,  
Teach, gratify, her master God appoints?  
And I am young, my Festus, happy and free!  
I can devote myself; I have a life  
To give; I, singled out for this, the One!  
Think, think; the wide east, where old Wisdom sprung;  
The bright south, where she dwelt; the hopeful north,  
All are passed o'er—it lights on me! 'Tis time  
New hopes should animate the world, new light  
Should dawn from new revealings to a race  
Weighed down so long, forgotten so long; so shall  
The heaven reserved for us, at last receive  
Creatures whom no unwonted splendours blind,  
But ardent to confront the unclouded blaze  
Whose beams not seldom blest their pilgrimage,  
Not seldom glorified their life below.

*Fest.* My words have their old fate and make faint  
stand

Against your glowing periods. Call this, truth—  
Why not pursue it in a fast retreat,  
Some one of Learning's many palaces,  
After approved example; seeking there  
Calm converse with the great dead, soul to soul,  
Who laid up treasure with the like intent?  
—So lift yourself into their airy place,  
And fill out full their unfulfilled careers,  
Unravelling the knots their baffled skill  
Pronounced inextricable, true!—but left  
Far less confused? A fresh eye, a fresh hand,  
Might do much at their vigour's waning-point;  
Succeeding with new-breathed and earnest force,  
As at old games a runner snatched the torch  
From runner still: this way success might be.  
But you have coupled with your enterprise,  
An arbitrary self-repugnant scheme  
Of seeking it in strange and untried paths.  
What books are in the desert? writes the sea  
The secret of her yearning in vast caves

## PARACELSUS

Where yours will fall the first of human feet?  
Has Wisdom sate there and recorded aught  
You press to read? Why turn aside from her  
To visit, where her vesture never glanced,  
Now—solitudes consigned to barrenness  
By God's decree, which who shall dare impugn?  
Now—ruins where she paused but would not stay.  
Old ravaged cities that, renouncing her,  
She called an endless curse on, so it came—  
Or, worst of all, now—men you visit, men,  
Ignoblest troops that never heard her voice,  
Or hate it, men without one gift from Rome  
Or Athens,—these shall Aureole's teachers be!  
Rejecting past example, practice, precept,  
Aidless 'mid these he thinks to stand alone:  
Thick like a glory round the Stagyrite  
Your rivals throng, the sages: here stand you!  
Whate'er you may protest, knowledge is not  
Paramount in your love; or for her sake  
You would collect all help from every source—  
Rival or helper, friend, foe, all would merge  
In the broad class of those who showed her haunts,  
And those who showed them not.

*Par.*

What shall I say?

Festus, from childhood I have been possessed  
By a fire—by a true fire, or faint or fierce,  
As from without some master, so it seemed,  
Repressed or urged its current: this but ill  
Expresses what I would convey—but rather  
I will believe an angel ruled me thus,  
Than that my soul's own workings, own high nature,  
So became manifest. I knew not then  
What whispered in the evening, and spoke out  
At midnight. If some mortal, born too soon,  
Were laid away in some great trance—the ages  
Coming and going all the while—till dawned  
His true time's advent, and could then record  
The words they spoke who kept watch by his bed,—  
Then I might tell more of the breath so light  
Upon my eyelids, and the fingers warm

## PARACELSUS

Among my hair. Youth is confused ; yet never  
So dull was I but, when that spirit passed,  
I turned to him, scarce consciously, as turns  
A water-snake when fairies cross his sleep.  
And having this within me and about me  
While Einsiedeln, its mountains, lakes, and woods  
Confined me—what oppressive joy was mine  
When life grew plain, and I first viewed the thronged,  
The ever-moving concourse of mankind !  
Believe that ere I joined them—ere I knew  
The purpose of the pageant, or the place  
Consigned to me within its ranks—while yet  
Wonder was freshest and delight most pure—  
’Twas then that least supportable appeared  
A station with the brightest of the crowd,  
A portion with the proudest of them all !  
And from the tumult in my breast, this only  
Could I collect—that I must thenceforth die,  
Or elevate myself far, far above  
The gorgeous spectacle. I seemed to long  
At once to trample on—yet save mankind—  
To make some unexampled sacrifice  
In their behalf—to wring some wondrous good  
From heaven or earth for them—to perish, winning  
Eternal weal in the act : as who should dare  
Pluck out the angry thunder from its cloud,  
That, all its gathered flame discharged on him,  
No storm might threaten summer’s azure sleep :  
Yet never to be mixed with men so much  
As to have part even in my own work—share  
In my own largess. Once the feat achieved,  
I would withdraw from their officious praise,  
Would gently put aside their profuse thanks :  
Like some knight traversing a wilderness,  
Who, on his way, may chance to free a tribe  
Of desert-people from their dragon-foe ;  
When all the swarthy race press round to kiss  
His feet, and choose him for their king, and yield  
Their poor tents, pitched among the sand-hills, for  
His realm ; and he points, smiling, to his scarf,

## PARACELSUS

Heavy with riveled gold, his burgonet,  
Gay set with twinkling stones—and to the east,  
Where these must be displayed!

*Fest.* Good: let us hear  
No more about your nature, "which first shrank  
"From all that marked you out apart from men!"

*Par.* I touch on that: these words but analyse  
That first mad impulse—'twas as brief as fond;  
For as I gazed again upon the show,  
I soon distinguished here and there a shape  
Palm-wreathed and radiant, forehead and full eye.  
Well pleased was I their state should thus at once  
Interpret my own thoughts:—"Behold the clue  
"To all," I rashly said, "and what I pine  
"To do, these have accomplished: we are peers!  
"They know, and therefore rule: I, too, will know!"  
You were beside me, Festus, as you say;  
You saw me plunge in their pursuits whom Fame  
Is lavish to attest the lords of mind;  
Not pausing to make sure the prize in view  
Would satiate my cravings when obtained—  
But since they strove I strove. Then came a slow  
And strangling failure. We aspired alike,  
Yet not the meanest plodder Tritheim schools  
But faced me, all-sufficient, all-content,  
Or staggered only at his own strong wits;  
While I was restless, nothing satisfied,  
Distrustful, most perplexed. I would slur over  
That struggle; suffice it, that I loathed myself  
As weak compared with them, yet felt somehow  
A mighty power was brooding, taking shape  
Within me: and this lasted till one night  
When, as I sate revolving it and more,  
A still voice from without said—"See'st thou not,  
"Desponding child, whence came defeat and loss?  
"Even from thy strength. Consider: hast thou gazed  
"Presumptuously on Wisdom's countenance,  
"No veil between; and can thy hands which falter  
"Unguided by thy brain the mighty sight  
"Continues to absorb, pursue their task

## PARACELSUS

"On earth like these around thee—what their sense  
"Which radiance ne'er distracted, clear describes?  
"If thou wouldst share their fortune, choose their  
    life,  
"Unfed by splendour. Let each task present  
"Its petty good to thee. Waste not thy gifts  
"In profitless waiting for the gods' descent,  
"But have some idol of thine own to dress  
"With their array. Know, not for knowing's sake,  
"But to become a star to men for ever.  
"Know, for the gain it gets, the praise it brings,  
"The wonder it inspires, the love it breeds.  
"Look one step onward, and secure that step."  
And I smiled as one never smiles but once;  
Then first discovering my own aim's extent,  
Which sought to comprehend the works of God,  
And God himself, and all God's intercourse  
With the human mind; I understood, no less,  
My fellow's studies, whose true worth I saw,  
But smiled not, well aware who stood by me.  
And softer came the voice—"There is a way—  
"'Tis hard for flesh to tread therein, imbued  
"With frailty—hopeless, if indulgence first  
"Have ripened inborn germs of sin to strength:  
"Wilt thou adventure for my sake and man's,  
"Apart from all reward?" And last it breathed—  
"Be happy, my good soldier; I am by thee,  
"Be sure, even to the end!"—I answered not,  
Knowing Him. As He spoke, I was endued  
With comprehension and a steadfast will;  
And when He ceased, my brow was sealed His own.  
If there took place no special change in me,  
How comes it all things wore a different hue  
Thenceforward?—pregnant with vast consequence—  
Teeming with grand results—loaded with fate;  
So that when quailing at the mighty range  
Of secret truths which yearn for birth, I haste  
To contemplate undazzled some one truth,  
Its bearings and effects alone—at once  
What was a speck expands into a star,

## PARACELSUS

Asking a life to pass exploring thus,  
Till I near craze. I go to prove my soul!  
I see my way as birds their trackless way—  
I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first,  
I ask not: but unless God send his hail  
Or blinding fire-balls, sleet, or stifling snow,  
In some time—his good time—I shall arrive:  
He guides me and the bird. In his good time!

*Mich.* Vex him no further, Festus; it is so!

*Fest.* Just thus you help me ever. This would hold  
Were it the trackless air, and not a path  
Inviting you, distinct with footprints yet  
Of many a mighty spirit gone that way.  
You may have purer views than theirs, perhaps,  
But they were famous in their day—the proofs  
Remain. At least accept the light they lend.

*Par.* Their light! the sum of all is briefly this:  
They laboured, and grew famous; and the fruits  
Are best seen in a dark and groaning earth,  
Given over to a blind and endless strife  
With evils, which of all your Gods abates?  
No; I reject and spurn them utterly,  
And all they teach. Shall I still sit beside  
Their dry wells, with a white lip and filmed eye,  
While in the distance heaven is blue above  
Mountains where sleep the unsunned tarns?

*Fest.* And yet  
As strong delusions have prevailed ere now:  
Men have set out as gallantly to seek  
Their ruin; I have heard of such—yourself  
Avow all hitherto have failed and fallen.

*Mich.* Nay, Festus, when but as the pilgrims faint  
Through the drear way, do you expect to see  
Their city dawn afar amid the clouds?

*Par.* Ay, sounds it not like some old well-known  
tale?  
For me, I estimate their works and them  
So rightly, that at times I almost dream  
I too have spent a life the sages' way,  
And tread once more familiar paths. Perchance



## PARACELSUS

I perished in an arrogant self-reliance  
An age ago; and in that act, a prayer  
For one more chance went up so earnest, so  
Instinct with better light let in by Death,  
That life was blotted out—not so completely  
But scattered wrecks enough of it remain,  
Dim memories; as now, when seems once more  
The goal in sight again: all which, indeed,  
Is foolish, and only means—the flesh I wear,  
The earth I tread, are not more clear to me  
Than my belief, explained to you or no.

*Fest.* And who am I to challenge and dispute  
That clear belief? I put away all fear.

*Mich.* Then Aureole is God's commissary! he shall  
Be great and grand—and all for us!

*Par.* No, sweet!  
Not great and grand. If I can serve mankind  
'Tis well—but there our intercourse must end:  
I never will be served by those I serve.

*Fest.* Look well to this; here is a plague-spot, here,  
Disguise it how you may! 'Tis true, you utter  
This scorn while by our side and loving us;  
'Tis but a spot as yet; but it will break  
Into a hideous blotch if overlooked.  
How can that course be safe which from the first  
Produces carelessness to human love?  
It seems you have abjured the helps which men  
Who overpass their kind, as you would do,  
Have humbly sought—I dare not thoroughly probe  
This matter, lest I learn too much: let be,  
That popular praise would little instigate  
Your efforts, nor particular approval  
Reward you; put reward aside; alone  
You shall go forth upon your arduous task,  
None shall assist you, none partake your toil,  
None share your triumph—still you must retain  
Some one to cast your glory on, to share  
Your rapture with. Were I elect like you,  
I would encircle me with love, and raise  
A rampart of my fellows; it should seem

## PARACELSUS

Impossible for me to fail, so watched  
By gentle friends who made my cause their own;  
They should ward off Fate's envy—the great gift,  
Extravagant when claimed by me alone,  
Being so a gift to them as well as me.  
If danger daunted me or ease seduced,  
How calmly their sad eyes should gaze reproach!

*Mich.* O Aureole, can I sing when all alone,  
Without first calling, in my fancy, both  
To listen by my side—even I! And you?  
Do you not feel this?—say that you feel this!

*Par.* I feel 'tis pleasant that my aims, at length  
Allowed their weight, should be supposed to need  
A further strengthening in these goodly helps!  
My course allures for its own sake—its sole  
Intrinsic worth; and ne'er shall boat of mine  
Adventure forth for gold and apes at once.  
Your sages say, "if human, therefore weak:"  
If weak, more need to give myself entire  
To my pursuit; and by its side, all else . . .  
No matter! I deny myself but little  
In waiving all assistance save its own—  
Would there were some real sacrifice to make!  
Your friends the sages threw their joys away,  
While I must be content with keeping mine.

*Fest.* But do not cut yourself from human weal?  
You cannot thrive—a man that dares affect  
To spend his life in service to his kind,  
For no reward of theirs, nor bound to them  
By any tie; nor do so, Aureole! No—  
There are strange punishments for such. Give up  
(Although no visible good flow thence) some part  
Of the glory to another; hiding thus,  
Even from yourself, that all is for yourself.  
Say, say almost to God—"I have done all  
"For her—not for myself!"

*Par.* . . . . . And who, but lately,  
Was to rejoice in my success like you?  
Whom should I love but both of you?

*Fest.* . . . . . I know not:

## PARACELSUS

But know this, you, that 'tis no wish of mine  
You should abjure the lofty claims you make;  
Although I can no longer seek, indeed,  
To overlook the truth, that there will be  
A monstrous spectacle upon the earth,  
Beneath the pleasant sun, among the trees:  
—A being knowing not what love is. Hear me!  
You are endowed with faculties which bear  
Annexed to them as 'twere a dispensation  
To summon meaner spirits to do their will,  
And gather round them at their need; inspiring  
Such with a love themselves can never feel—  
Passionless 'mid their passionate votaries.  
I know not if you joy in this or no,  
Or ever dream that common men can live  
On objects you prize lightly, but which make  
Their heart's sole treasure: the affections seem  
Beauteous at most to you, which we must taste  
Or die: and this strange quality accords,  
I know not how, with you; sits well upon  
That luminous brow, though in another it scowls  
An eating brand—a shame. I dare not judge you:  
The rules of right and wrong thus set aside,  
There's no alternative—I own you one  
Of higher order, under other laws  
Than bind us; therefore, curb not one bold glance!  
'Tis best aspire. Once mingled with us all . . .

*Mich.* Stay with us, Aureole! cast those hopes  
away,

And stay with us! An angel warns me, too,  
Man should be humble; you are very proud:  
And God, dethroned, has doleful plagues for such!  
He warns me not to dread a quick repulse,  
Nor slow defeat, but a complete success!  
You will find all you seek, and perish so!

*Par.* (*After a pause.*) Are these the barren first fruits  
of my life?

Is love like this the natural lot of all?  
How many years of pain might one such hour  
O'erbalance? Dearest Michal, dearest Festus,

## PARACELSUS

What shall I say, if not that I desire  
To merit this your love; and will, dear friends,  
In swerving nothing from my first resolves.  
See, the great moon! and 'ere the mottled owls  
Were wide awake, I was to go. It seems  
You acquiesce at last in all save this—  
If I am like to compass what I seek  
By the untried career I chuse; and then,  
If that career, making but small account  
Of much of life's delight, will yet retain  
Sufficient to sustain my soul—for thus  
I understand these fond fears just expressed.  
And first; the lore you praise and I neglect,  
The labours and the precepts of old time,  
I have not slightly disesteemed. But, friends,  
Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise  
From outward things, whate'er you may believe:  
There is an inmost centre in us all,  
Where truth abides in fulness; and around  
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,  
This perfect, clear perception—which is truth;  
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh  
Blinds it, and makes all error: and, "*to know*"  
Rather consists in opening out a way  
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,  
Than in effecting entry for a light  
Supposed to be without. Watch narrowly  
The demonstration of a truth, its birth,  
And you trace back the effluence to its spring  
And source within us, where broods radiance vast,  
To be elicited ray by ray, as chance  
Shall favour: chance—for hitherto, your sage  
Even as he knows not how those beams are born,  
As little knows he what unlocks their fount;  
And men have oft grown old among their books  
To die, case-hardened in their ignorance,  
Whose careless youth had promised what long years  
Of unremitted labour ne'er performed:  
While, contrary, it has chanced some idle day,  
That autumn loiterers just as fancy-free

## PARACELSUS

As the midges in the sun, have oft given vent  
To truth—produced mysteriously as cape  
Of cloud grown out of the invisible air.  
Hence, may not truth be lodged alike in all,  
The lowest as the highest? some slight film  
The interposing bar which binds it up,  
And makes the idiot, just as makes the sage  
Some film removed, the happy outlet whence  
Truth issues proudly? See this soul of ours!  
How it strives weakly in the child, is loosed  
In manhood, clogged by sickness, back compelled  
By age and waste, set free at last by death:  
Why is it, flesh enthralls it or enthrones?  
What is this flesh we have to penetrate?  
Oh, not alone when life flows still do truth  
And power emerge, but also when strange chance  
Ruffles its current; in unused conjuncture,  
When sickness breaks the body—hunger, watching,  
Excess, or languor—oftenest death's approach—  
Peril, deep joy, or woe. One man shall crawl  
Through life, surrounded with all stirring things,  
Unmoved—and he goes mad; and from the wreck  
Of what he was, by his wild talk alone,  
You first collect how great a spirit he hid.  
Therefore, set free the soul alike in all,  
Discovering the true laws by which the flesh  
Bars in the spirit! We may not be doomed  
To cope with seraphs, but at least the rest  
Shall cope with us. Make no more giants, God!  
But elevate the race at once! We ask  
To put forth just our strength, our human strength,  
All starting fairly, all equipped alike,  
Gifted alike, all eagle-eyed, true-hearted—  
See if we cannot beat thy angels yet!  
Such is my task. I go to gather this  
The sacred knowledge, here and there dispersed  
About the world, long lost or never found.  
And why should I be sad, or lorn of hope?  
Why ever make man's good distinct from God's?  
Or, finding they are one, why dare mistrust?

## PARACELSUS

Who shall succeed if not one pledged like me?  
Mine is no mad attempt to build a world  
Apart from His, like those who set themselves  
To find the nature of the spirit they bore,  
And, taught betimes that all their gorgeous dreams  
Were only born to vanish in this life,  
Refused to fit them to this narrow sphere,  
But chose to figure forth another world  
And other frames meet for their vast desires,—  
Still, all a dream! Thus was life scorned; but life  
Shall yet be crowned: twine amaranth! I am priest!  
And all for yielding with a lively spirit  
A poor existence—parting with a youth  
Like theirs who squander every energy  
Convertible to good, on painted toys,  
Breath-bubbles, gilded dust! And though I spurn  
All adventitious aims, from empty praise  
To love's award, yet whoso deems such helps  
Important, and concerns himself for me,  
May know even these will follow with the rest—  
As in the steady rolling Mayne, asleep  
Yonder, is mixed its mass of schistous ore.  
My own affections, laid to rest awhile,  
Will waken purified, subdued alone  
By all I have achieved; till then—till then . . .  
Ah! the time-wiling loitering of a page  
Through bower and over lawn, till eve shall bring  
The stately lady's presence whom he loves—  
The broken sleep of the fisher whose rough coat  
Enwraps the queenly pearl—these are faint types!  
See how they look on me—I triumph now!  
But one thing, Festus, Michal!—I have told  
All I shall e'er disclose to mortal: say—  
Do you believe I shall accomplish this?

*Fest.* I do believe!

*Mich.* . . . I ever did believe!

*Par.* Those words shall never fade from out my  
brain!

This earnest of the end shall never fade!  
Are there not, Festus, are there not, dear Michal,

## PARACELSUS

Two points in the adventure of the diver:  
One—when, a beggar, he prepares to plunge?  
One—when, a prince, he rises with his pearl?  
Festus, I plunge!

*Fest.* I wait you when you rise!

## II. PARACELSUS ATTAINS

SCENE. *Constantinople.*—"The House of the Greek-conjuror." 1521.

### PARACELSUS

Over the waters in the vapourous west  
The sun goes down as in a sphere of gold,  
Behind the outstretched city, which between,  
With all that length of domes and minarets,  
Athwart the splendour, black and crooked runs  
Like a Turk verse along a scimitar.  
There lie, thou saddest writing, and awhile  
Relieve my aching sight. 'Tis done at last!  
Strange—and the juggles of a sallow cheat  
Could win me to this act! 'Tis as yon cloud  
Should voyage unwreck'd o'er many a mountain-top  
And break upon a molehill. I have dared  
Come to a pause with knowledge; scan for once  
The heights already reach'd, without regard  
To the extent above; fairly compute  
What I have clearly gained; for once excluding  
My future which should finish and fulfil  
All half-gains, and conjectures, and mere hopes—  
And this, because a fortune-teller bids  
His credulous enquirers write thus much,  
Their previous life's attainment, in his book,  
Before his promised secret, as he vaunts,  
Make that life perfect: here, accordingly,  
'Mid the uncouth recordings of such dupes,  
—Scrawled in like fashion, lie my life's results!

## PARACELSUS

These few blurred characters suffice to note  
A stranger wandered long through many lands,  
And reaped the fruit he coveted in a few  
Discoveries, as appended here and there,  
The fragmentary produce of much toil,  
In a dim heap, fact and surmise together  
Confusedly massed, as when acquired ; himself  
Too bent on gaining more to calmly stay  
And scrutinize the little which he gained :  
Slipt in the blank space 'twixt an idiot's gibber  
And a mad lover's ditty—lies the whole !

And yet those blottings chronicle a life—  
A whole life,—mine ! No thought to turn to act,  
No problem for the fancy, but a life  
Spent and decided, wasted past recall,  
Or worthy beyond peer. Stay, turn the page  
And take its chance,—thus : what, concerning “life”  
Does this remembrancer set down?—“We say  
“‘Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream.’  
“‘Tis the mere echo of time ; and he whose heart  
“Beat first beneath a human heart, whose speech  
“Was copied from a human tongue, can never  
“Recall when he was living yet knew not this.  
“Nevertheless long seasons come and go,  
“Till some one hour's experience shows what nought,  
“He deemed, could clearer show ; and ever after  
“An altered brow, and eye, and gait, and speech  
“Attest that now he knows the adage true  
“‘Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream.’”

Ay, my brave chronicler, and this same time  
As well as any : let my hour speak now !

Now ! I can go no farther ; well or ill—  
’Tis done. I must desist and take my chance ;  
I cannot keep on the stretch ; ’tis no back-shrinking—  
For let the least assurance dawn, some end  
To my toil seem possible, and I proceed  
At any price, by any sacrifice :



## PARACELSUS

Else, here I pause: the old Greek's prophecy  
Is like to turn out true—"I shall not quit  
"His chamber till I know what I desire!"  
Was it the light wind sung it, o'er the sea?

An end, a rest! strange how the notion, once  
Admitted, gains strength every moment! Rest!  
Where kept that thought so long? this throbbing  
brow

To cease—this beating heart to cease—its crowd  
Of gnawing thoughts to cease!—To dare let down  
My strung, so high-strung brain—to dare unnerve  
My harassed o'ertasked frame—to know my place,  
—My portion, my reward, my failure even,  
Assigned, made sure for ever!—To lose myself  
Among the common creatures of the world—  
To draw some gain from having been a man—  
Neither to hope nor fear—to live at length!  
Oh, were it but in failure, to have rest!  
What, sunk insensibly so deep? Has all  
Been undergone for this? Was this the prayer  
My labour qualified me to present  
With no fear of refusal? Had I gone  
Carelessly through my task, and so judged fit  
To moderate my hopes; nay, were it now  
My sole concern to exculpate myself,  
And lessen punishment,—I could not chuse  
An humbler mood to wait for the decree!  
No, no, there needs not this; no, after all,  
At worst I have performed my share of the task:  
The rest is God's concern—mine, merely this,  
To know that I have obstinately held  
By my own work. The mortal whose brave foot  
Has trod, unscathed, the temple-courts so far  
That he descries at length the shrine of shrines,  
Must let no sneering of the demons' eyes,  
Whose wrath he met unquailing, follow sly  
And fasten on him, fairly past their power,  
If where he stands he dares but stay; no, no—  
He must not stagger, faint and fall at last,

## PARACELSUS

—Knowing a charm to baffle them ; behold,  
He bares his front—a mortal ventures thus  
Serene amid the echoes, beams, and glooms !  
If he be priest henceforth, or if he wake  
The god of the place to ban and blast him there,—  
Both well ! What's failure or success to me ?  
I have subdued my life to the one end  
Ordained life ; there alone I cannot doubt,  
That only way I may be satisfied.  
Yes, well have I subdued my life ! beyond  
The obligation of my strictest vows,  
The contemplation of my wildest bond,  
Which gave, in truth, my nature freely up,  
In what it should be, more than what it was—  
Consenting that whatever passions slept,  
Whatever impulses lay unmatured,  
Should wither in the germ,—but scarce foreseeing  
That the soil, doomed thus to perpetual waste,  
Would seem one day, remembered in its youth  
Beside the parched sand-tract which now it is,  
Already strewn with faint blooms, viewless then.  
I ne'er engaged to root up loves so frail  
I felt them not ; yet now, 'tis very plain  
Some soft spots had their birth in me at first—  
If not love, say, like love : there was a time  
When yet this wolfish hunger after knowledge  
Set not remorselessly love's claims aside ;  
This heart was human once, or why recall  
Einsiedeln, now, and Würzburg, which the Mayne  
Forsakes her course to fold as with an arm ?

And Festus—my poor Festus, with his praise,  
And counsel, and grave fears—where is he now ?  
Or the sweet maiden, long ago his bride ?  
I surely loved them—that last night, at least,  
When we . . . gone ! gone ! the better : I am saved  
The sad review of an ambitious youth,  
Choked by vile lusts, unnoticed in their birth,  
But let grow up and wind around a will  
Till action was destroyed. No, I have gone

## PARACELSUS

Purging my path successively of aught  
Wearing the distant likeness of such lusts,  
I have made life consist of one idea :  
Ere that was master—up till that was born—  
I bear a memory of a pleasant life  
Whose small events I treasure ; till one morn  
I ran o'er the seven little grassy fields,  
Startling the flocks of nameless birds, to tell  
Poor Festus, leaping all the while for joy,  
To leave all trouble for futurity,  
Since I had just determined to become  
The greatest and most glorious man on earth.  
And since that morn all life has been forgot ;  
All is one day—one only step between  
The outset and the end : one tyrant aim,  
Absorbing all, fills up the interval—  
One vast unbroken chain of thought, kept up  
Through a career or friendly or opposed  
To its existence : life, death, light and shade  
The shows of the world, were bare receptacles  
Or indices of truth to be wrung thence,  
Not instruments of sorrow or delight :  
For some one truth would dimly beacon me  
From mountains rough with pines, and flit and wink  
O'er dazzling wastes of frozen snow, and tremble  
Into assured light in some branching mine,  
Where ripens, swathed in fire, the liquid gold—  
And all the beauty, all the wonder fell  
On either side the truth, as its mere robe ;  
Men saw the robe—I saw the august form.  
So far, then, I have voyaged with success,  
So much is good, then, in this working sea  
Which parts me from that happy strip of land—  
But o'er that happy strip 'a sun shone, too !  
And fainter gleams it as the waves grow rough,  
And still more faint as the sea widens ; last  
I sicken on a dead gulph, streaked with light  
From its own putrifying depths alone !  
Then—God was pledged to take me by the hand ;  
Now—any miserable juggler bends

## PARACELSUS

My pride to him. All seems alike at length :  
Who knows which are the wise and which the fools ?  
God may take pleasure in confounding pride  
By hiding secrets with the scorned and base—  
He who stoops lowest may find most—in short,  
I am here; and all seems natural; I start not .  
And never having glanced behind to know  
If I had kept my primal light from wane,  
Am thus insensibly grown—what I am !

Oh, bitter ; very bitter !

And more bitter,  
To fear a deeper curse, an inner ruin—  
Plague beneath plague—the last turning the first  
To light beside its darkness. Better weep  
My youth and its brave hopes, all dead and gone  
In tears which burn ! Would I were sure to win  
Some startling secret in their stead !—a tincture  
Of force to flush old age with youth, or breed  
Gold, or imprison moonbeams till they change  
To opal shafts !—only that, hurling it  
Indignant back, I might convince myself  
My aims remained as ever supreme and pure !  
Even now, why not desire, for mankind's sake,  
That if I fail, some fault may be the cause,—  
That, though I sink, another may succeed ?  
O God, the despicable heart of us !  
Shut out this hideous mockery from my heart !

"Twas politic in you, Aureole, to reject  
Single rewards, and ask them in the lump ;  
At all events, once launched, to hold straight on :  
For now 'tis all or nothing. Mighty profit  
Your gains will bring if they stop short of such  
Full consummation ! As a man, you had  
A certain share of strength, and that is gone  
Already in the getting these you boast.  
Do not they seem to laugh, as who should say—  
"Great master, we are here indeed ; dragged forth  
"To light this hast thou done ; be glad ! now, seek

## PARACELSUS

“The strength to use which thou hast spent in getting!”

And yet 'tis surely much, 'tis very much,  
Thus to have emptied youth of all its gifts,  
To feed a fire meant to hold out till morn  
Arrive with inexhaustible light; and lo,  
I have heaped up my last, and day dawns not!  
While I am left with grey hair, faded hands,  
And furrowed brow. Ha, have I, after all,  
Mistaken the wild nursling of my breast?  
Knowledge it seemed, and Power, and Recompense!  
Was she who glided through my room of nights,—  
Who laid my head on her soft knees, and smoothed  
The damp locks,—whose sly soothings just began  
When my sick spirit craved repose awhile—  
God! was I fighting Sleep off for Death's sake?  
God! Thou art Mind! Unto the Master-Mind  
Mind should be precious. Spare my mind alone!  
All else I will endure: if, as I stand  
Here, with my gains, thy thunder smite me down,  
I bow me; 'tis thy will, thy righteous will;  
I o'erpass life's restrictions, and I die:  
And if no trace of my career remain,  
Save a thin corpse at pleasure of the wind  
In these bright chambers, level with the air,  
See thou to it! But if my spirit fail,  
My once proud spirit forsake me at the last,  
Hast thou done well by me? So do not thou!  
Crush not my mind, dear God, though I be crushed!  
Hold me before the frequency of thy seraphs,  
And say—"I crushed him, lest he should disturb  
"My law. Men must not know their strength:  
    behold,  
"Weak and alone, how near he raised himself!"

But if delusions trouble me—and Thou,  
Not seldom felt with rapture in thy help  
Throughout my toil and wanderings, dost intend  
To work man's welfare through my weak endeavour—

## PARACELSUS

To crown my mortal forehead with a beam  
From thine own blinding crown—to smile, and guide  
This puny hand, and let the work so framed  
Be styled my work,—hear me ! I covet not  
An influx of new power, an angel's soul :  
It were no marvel then—but I have reached  
Thus far, a man ; let me conclude, a man !  
Give but one hour of my first energy,  
Of that invincible faith—one only hour !  
That I may cover with an eagle-glance  
The truths I have, and spy some certain way  
To mould them, and completing them, possess !

Yet God is good : I started sure of that,  
And why dispute it now ? I'll not believe  
But some undoubted warning long ere this  
Had reached me : stars would write his will in heaven.  
As once when a labarum was not deemed  
Too much for the old founder of these walls.  
Then, if my life has not been natural,  
It has been monstrous : yet, till late, my course  
So ardently engrossed me, that delight,  
A pausing and reflecting joy, 'tis plain,  
Though such were meant to follow as its fruit,  
Could find no place in it. True, I am worn ;  
But who clothes summer, who is Life itself ?  
God, that created all things, can renew !  
And then, though after life to please me now  
Must have no likeness to the past, what hinders  
Reward from springing out of toil, as changed  
As bursts the flower from earth, and root, and stalk ?  
What use were punishment, unless some sin  
Be first detected ? let me know that first !  
(*Aprile, from within*)

I hear a voice, perchance I heard  
Long ago, but all too low,  
So that scarce a thought was stirred  
If really spoke the voice or no :

## PARACELSUS

I heard it in my youth, when first  
The waters of my life outburst:  
But now their stream ebbs faint, I hear  
The voice, still low, but fatal-clear—  
As if all Poets, that God meant  
Should save the world, and therefore lent  
Great gifts to, but who, proud, refused  
To do his work, or lightly used  
Those gifts, or failed through weak endeavour,  
And mourn, cast off by him forever,—  
As if these leaned in airy ring  
To call me; this the song they sing.

“Lost, lost! yet come,  
With our wan troupe make thy home:  
Come, come! for we  
Will not breathe, so much as breathe  
Reproach to thee!  
Knowing what thou sink'st beneath:  
So we sank in those old years,  
We who bid thee, come! thou last  
Who, a living man, hast life o'erpast,  
And all together we, thy peers,  
Will pardon ask for thee, the last  
Whose trial is done, whose lot is cast  
With those who watch, but work no more—  
Who gaze on life, but live no more:  
And yet we trusted thou shouldst speak  
God's message which our lips, too weak,  
Refused to utter,—shouldst redeem  
Our fault: such trust, and all, a dream!  
So we chose thee a bright birth-place  
Where the richness ran to flowers—  
Couldst not sing one song for grace?  
Nor make one blossom man's and ours?  
Must one more recreant to his race  
Die with unexerted powers  
And join us, leaving as he found  
The world, he was to loosen, bound?  
Anguish! ever and for ever;

## PARACELSUS

Still beginning, ending never!  
Yet, lost and last one, come!  
How couldst understand, alas,  
What our pale ghosts strove to say,  
As their shades did glance and pass  
Before thee, night and day?  
Thou wert blind, as we were dumb;  
Once more, therefore, come, O come!  
How shall we better arm the spirit  
Who next shall thy post of life inherit—  
How guard him from thy ruin?  
Tell us of thy sad undoing  
Here, where we sit, ever pursuing  
Our weary task, ever renewing  
Sharp sorrow, far from God who gave  
Our powers, and man they could not save!"

*APRILE enters.*

A spirit better armed, succeeding me?  
Ha, ha! our king that wouldst be, here at last?  
Art thou the Poet who shall save the world?  
Thy hand to mine. Stay, fix thine eyes on mine.  
Thou wouldst be king? Still fix thine eyes on mine!  
*Par.* Ha, ha! why crouchest not? Am I not king?  
So torture is not wholly unavailing!  
Have my fierce spasms compelled thee from thy lair?  
Art thou the Sage I only seemed to be,  
Myself of after-time, my very self  
With sight a little clearer, strength more firm,  
Who robs me of my prize and takes my place  
For just a fault, a weakness, a neglect?  
I scarcely trusted God with the surmise  
That such might come, and thou didst hear the while!  
*Apr.* Thine eyes are lustreless to mine; my hair  
Is soft, nay silken soft: to talk with thee  
Flushes my cheek, and thou art ashy-pale,  
True, thou hast laboured, hast withstood her lips,  
The siren's! Yes, 'tis like thou hast attained!



## PARACELSUS

Tell me, dear master, wherefore now thou comest?  
I thought thy solemn songs would have their meed  
In after-time; that I should hear the earth  
Exult in thee, and echo with thy praise,  
While I was laid forgotten in my grave.

*Par.* Not so! I know thee, I am not thy dupe!  
Thou art ordained to follow in my track,  
Even as thou sayest, succeeding to my place,  
Reaping my sowing—as I scorned to reap  
The harvest sown by sages passed away.  
Thou art the sober searcher, cautious striver,  
As if, except through me, thou had searched or  
striven!

Ay! tell the world! Degrade me, after all,  
To an aspirant after fame, not truth—  
To all but envy of thy fate, be sure!

*Apr.* Nay, sing them to me; I shall envy not:  
Thou shalt be king! Sing thou, and I will stand  
Beside, and call deep silence for thy songs,  
And worship thee, as I had ne'er been meant  
To fill thy throne—but none shall ever know!  
Sing to me: for already thy wild eyes  
Unlock my heart-springs, as some crystal-shaft  
Reveals by some chance blaze its parent fount  
After long time—so thou reveal'st my soul!  
All will flash forth at last, with thee to hear!

*Par.* (His secret! my successor's secret—fool!)  
I am he that aspired to KNOW—and thou?

*Apr.* I would LOVE infinitely, and be loved!

*Par.* Poor slave! I am thy king indeed.

*Apr.* Thou deem'st  
That—born a spirit, dowered even as thou,  
Born for thy fate—because I could not curb  
My yearnings to possess at once the full  
Enjoyment; yet neglected all the means  
Of realising even the frailest joy;  
Gathering no fragments to appease my want,  
Yet nursing up that want till thus I die—  
Thou deem'st I cannot trace thy safe, sure march,  
O'er perils that o'erwhelm me, triumphing,

## PARACELSUS

Neglecting nought below for aught above,  
Despising nothing and ensuring all—  
Nor that I could (my time to come again)  
Lead thus my spirit securely as thine own :  
Listen, and thou shalt see I know thee well  
I would love infinitely . . . Ah, lost ! lost !

O ye who armed me at such cost.

Your faces shall I bear to see

With your gifts even yet on me ?—

*Par.* (Ah, 'tis some moonstruck creature after all !  
Such fond fools as are like to haunt this den :  
They spread contagion, doubtless : yet he seemed  
To echo one foreboding of my heart  
So truly, that . . . no matter ! How he stands  
With eve's last sunbeam staying on his hair  
Which turns to it, as if they were akin :  
And those clear smiling eyes of saddest blue  
Nearly set free, so far they rise above  
The painful fruitless striving of that brow  
And enforced knowledge of those lips, firm set  
In slow despondency's eternal sigh !  
Has he, too, missed life's end, and learned the cause ?)  
Be calm, I charge thee, by thy fealty !  
Tell me what thou wouldst be, and what I am.

*Apr.* I would love infinitely, and be loved.  
First : I would carve in stone, or cast in brass,  
The forms of earth. No ancient hunter, raised  
Up to the gods by his renown ; no nymph  
Supposed the sweet soul of a woodland tree,  
Or sapphirine spirit of a twilight star,  
Should be too hard for me ; no shepherd-king,  
Regal with his white locks ; no youth who stands  
Silent and very calm amid the throng,  
His right hand ever hid beneath his robe  
Until the tyrant pass ; no law-giver ;  
No swan-soft woman, rubbed with lucid oils,  
Given by a god for love of her—too hard !  
Each passion sprung from man, conceived by man,  
Would I express and clothe it in its right form,  
Or blend with others struggling in one form,

## PARACELSUS

Or show repressed by an ungainly form.  
For, if you marvelled at some mighty spirit  
With a fit frame to execute his will—  
Ay, even unconsciously to work his will—  
You should be moved no less beside some strong,  
Rare spirit, fettered to a stubborn body,  
Endeavouring to subdue it, and inform it  
With its own splendour! All this I would do,  
And I would say, this done, "God's sprites being  
made,  
"He grants to each a sphere to be its world,  
"Appointed with the various objects needed  
"To satisfy its spiritual desires;  
"So, I create a world for these my shapes  
"Fit to sustain their beauty and their strength!"  
And, at their word, I would contrive and paint  
Woods, valleys, rocks, and plains, dells, sands, and  
wastes,  
Lakes which, when morn breaks on their quivering  
bed,  
Blaze like a wyvern flying round the sun;  
And ocean-isles so small, the dog-fish tracking  
A dead whale, who should find them, would swim  
thrice  
Around them, and fare onward—all to hold  
The offspring of my brain. Nor these alone—  
Bronze labyrinths, palace, pyramid, and crypt,  
Baths, galleries, courts, temples, and terraces,  
Marts, theatres, and wharfs—all filled with men!  
Men everywhere! And this performed in turn,  
When those who looked on, pined to hear the hopes,  
And fears, and hates, and loves which moved the  
crowd,—  
I would throw down the pencil as the chisel,  
And I would speak: no thought which ever stirred  
A human breast should be untold; no passions,  
No soft emotions, from the turbulent stir  
Within a heart fed with desires like mine—  
To the last comfort, shutting the tired lids  
Of him who sleeps the sultry noon away

## PARACELSUS

Beneath the tent-tree by the way-side well :  
And this in language as the need should be,  
Now poured at once forth in a burning flow,  
Now piled up in a grand array of words.  
This done, to perfect and consummate all,  
Even as a luminous haze links star to star,  
I would supply all chasms with music, breathing  
Mysterious notions of the soul, no way  
To be defined save in strange melodies.  
Last, having thus revealed all I could love,  
And having received all love bestowed on it,  
I would die: so preserving through my course  
God full on me, as I was full on men:  
And He would grant my prayer—"I have gone  
through  
"All loveliness of life; make more for me,  
"If not for men—or take me to thyself,  
"Eternal, infinite Love!"

If thou hast ne'er  
Conceived this mighty aim, this full desire,  
Thou hast not passed my trial, and thou art  
No king of mine.

*Par.* Ah me!

*Apr.* But thou art here!

Thou didst not gaze like me upon that end  
Till thine own powers for compassing the bliss  
Were blind with glory; nor grow mad to grasp  
At once the prize long patient toil should claim;  
Nor spurn all granted short of that. And I  
Would do as thou, a second time: nay, listen—  
Knowing ourselves, our world, our task so great,  
Our time so brief,—'tis clear if we refuse  
The means so limited, the tools so rude  
To execute our purpose, life will fleet,  
And we shall fade, and leave our task undone.  
Rather, grow wise in time: what though our work  
Be fashioned in despite of their ill-service,  
Be crippled every way? 'Twere little praise  
Did full resources wait on our good will  
At every turn. Let all be as it is.

## PARACELSUS

Some say the earth is even so contrived  
That tree, and flower, a vesture gay, conceal  
A bare and skeleton framework : had we means  
That answered to our mind ! But now I seem  
Wrecked on a savage isle : how rear thereon  
My palace ? Branching palms the props shall be,  
Fruit glossy mingling ; gems are for the east ;  
Who heeds them ? I can waive them. Serpent's  
scales,

Birds' feathers, downy furs, and fishes' skins  
Must help me ; and a little here and there  
Is all I can aspire to : still my art  
Shall show its birth was in a gentler clime.  
" Had I green jars of malachite, this way  
" I'd range them : where those sea-shells glisten above,  
" Cressets should hang, by right : this way we set  
" The purple carpets, as these mats are laid,  
" Woven of mere fern and rush and blossoming flag."  
Or if, by fortune, some completer grace  
Be spared to me, some fragment, some slight sample  
Of my own land's completer workmanship,  
Some trifle little heeded there, but here  
The place's one perfection—with what joy  
Would I enshrine the relic—cheerfully  
Foregoing all the marvels out of reach !  
Could I retain one strain of all the psalm  
Of the angels—one word of the fiat of God—  
To let my followers know what such things are !  
I would adventure nobly for their sakes :  
When nights were still, and still, the moaning sea,  
And far away I could descry the land  
Whence I departed, whither I return,  
I would dispart the waves, and stand once more  
At home, and load my bark, and hasten back,  
And fling my gains before them, rich or poor—  
" Friends," I would say, " I went far, far for them,  
" Past the high rocks the haunt of doves, the mounds  
" Of red earth from whose sides strange trees grow out,  
" Past tracks of milk-white minute blinding sand,  
" Till, by a mighty moon, I tremblingly

## PARACELSUS

"Gathered these magic herbs, berry and bud,  
"In haste—not pausing to reject the weeds,  
"But happy plucking them at any price.  
"To me, who have seen them bloom in their own soil,  
"They are scarce lovely : plait and wear them, you !  
"And guess, from what they are, the springs that fed—  
"The stars that sparkled o'er them, night by night,  
"The snakes that travelled far to sip their dew !"  
Thus for my higher loves ; and thus even weakness  
Would win me honour. But not these alone  
Should claim my care ; for common life, its wants  
And ways, would I set forth in beauteous hues :  
The lowest hind should not possess a hope,  
A fear, but I'd be by him, saying better  
Than he his own heart's language. I would live  
For ever in the thoughts I thus explored,  
As a discoverer's memory is attached  
To all he finds : they should be mine henceforth,  
Imbued with me, though free to all before ;  
For clay, once cast into my soul's rich mine  
Should come up crusted o'er with gems : nor this  
Would need a meaner spirit, than the first :  
Nay, 'twould be but the selfsame spirit, clothed  
In humbler guise, but still the selfsame spirit—  
As one spring wind unbinds the mountain snow,  
And comforts violets in their hermitage.  
But master, poet, who hast done all this,  
How didst thou 'scape the ruin I have met ?  
Didst thou, when nerving thee to this attempt,  
Ne'er range thy mind's extent, as some wide hall,  
Dazzled by shapes that filled its length with light,  
Shapes clustered there to rule thee, not obey—  
That will not wait thy summons, will not rise  
Singly, nor when thy practised eye and hand  
Can well transfer their loveliness, but crowd  
By thee for ever, bright to thy despair ?  
Didst thou ne'er gaze on each by turns, and ne'er  
Resolve to single out *one*, though the rest  
Should vanish, and to give that one, entire  
In beauty, to the world ; forgetting, so,

## PARACELSUS

Its peers, whose number baffles mortal power?  
And, this determined, wert thou ne'er seduced  
By memories, and regrets, and passionate love,  
To glance once more farewell? and did their eyes  
Fasten thee, brighter and more bright, until  
Thou couldst but stagger back unto their feet,  
And laugh that man's applause or welfare once  
Could tempt thee to forsake them? Or when years  
Had passed, and still their love possessed thee wholly;  
When from without some murmur startled thee  
Of darkling mortals, famished for one ray  
Of thy so-hoarded luxury of light,  
Didst thou ne'er strive even yet to break those spells,  
And prove thou couldst recover and fulfil  
Thy early mission, long ago renounced,  
And, to that end, select some shape once more?  
And did not mist-like influences, thick films,  
Faint memories of the rest, that charmed so long  
Thine eyes, float fast, confuse thee, bear thee off,  
As whirling snowdrifts blind a man who treads  
A mountain ridge, with guiding spear, through storm?  
Say, though I fell, I had excuse to fall;  
Say, I was tempted sorely: say but this,  
Dear lord, Aprile's lord!

*Par.* Clasp me not thus,  
Aprile! . . . That the truth should reach me thus!  
We are weak dust. Nay, clasp not, or I faint!

*Apr.* My king! and envious thoughts could outrage  
thee!

Lo, I forget my ruin, and rejoice  
In thy success, as thou! Let our God's praise  
Go bravely through the world at last! What care  
Through me or thee? I feel thy breath . . . why, tears?  
Tears in the darkness—and from thee to me?

*Par.* Love me henceforth, Aprile, while I learn  
To love; and, merciful God, forgive us both!  
We wake at length from weary dreams; but both  
Have slept in fairy-land: though dark and drear  
Appears the world before us, we no less  
Wake with our wrists and ancles jewelled still.

## PARACELSUS

I, too, have sought to KNOW as thou to LOVE—  
Excluding love as thou refusedst knowledge.  
Still thou hast beauty and I, power. We wake:  
What penance canst devise for both of us?

*Apr.* I hear thee faintly . . . the thick darkness!

Even

Thine eyes are hid. 'Tis as I knew : I speak,  
And now I die. But I have seen thy face!  
O, poet, think of me, and sing of me!  
But to have seen thee, and to die so soon!

*Par.* Die not, Aprile : we must never part.  
Are we not halves of one dissevered world,  
Whom this strange chance unites once more? Part?  
never!

Till thou, the lover, know; and I, the knower,  
Love—until both are saved. Aprile, hear!  
We will accept our gains, and use them—now!  
God, he will die upon my breast! Aprile!

*Apr.* To speak but once, and die! yet by his side.  
Hush! hush!

Ha! go you ever girt about  
With phantoms, powers? I have created such,  
But these seem real as I!

*Par.* Whom can you see  
Through the accursed darkness?

*Apr.* Stay; I know,  
I know them: who should know them well as I?—  
White brows, lit up with glory; poets all!

*Par.* Let him but live, and I have my reward!

*Apr.* Yes; I see now—God is the PERFECT POET,  
Who in creation acts his own conceptions.  
Shall man refuse to be ought less than God?  
Man's weakness is his glory—for the strength  
Which raises him to heaven and near God's self,  
Came spite of it: God's strength his glory is,  
For thence came with our weakness sympathy  
Which brought God down to earth, a man like us.  
Had you but told me this at first! . . . Hush! hush!

*Par.* Live! for my sake, because of my great sin,  
To help my brain, oppressed by these wild words



## PARACELSUS

And their deep import. Live! 'tis not too late :  
I have a quiet home for us, and friends.  
Michal shall smile on you . . . Hear you? Lean thus.  
And breathe my breath : I shall not lose one word  
Of all your speech—no little word, Aprile!

*Apr.* No, no. . . . Crown me? I am not one of you!  
'Tis he, the king, you seek. I am not one . . .

*Par.* Give me thy spirit, at least! Let me love, too!

I have attained, and now I may depart.

## III PARACELSUS

SCENE *A chamber in the house of Paracelsus at Basil*  
1528

### PARACELSUS, FESTUS

*Par.* Heap logs, and let the blaze laugh out!

*Fest.* . . . . . True, true!

'Tis very fit that all, time, chance, and change  
Have wrought since last we sate thus, face to face,  
And soul to soul—all cares, far-looking fears,  
Vague apprehensions, all vain fancies bred  
By your long absence, should be cast away,  
Forgotten in this glad unhop'd renewal  
Of our affections.

*Par.* . . . . . Oh, omit not aught  
Which witnesses your own and Michal's love!  
I bade you not spare that! Forget alone  
The honours and the glories, and the rest,  
You seem'd disposed to tell profusely out.

*Fest.* Nay, even your honours, in a sense, I waive:  
The wondrous Paracelsus—Life's dispenser,  
Fate's commissary, idol of the schools,  
And Courts, shall be no more than Aureole still—  
Still Aureole and my friend, as when we parted

## PARACELSUS

Some twenty years ago, and I restrained  
As I best could the promptings of my spirit,  
Which secretly advanced you, from the first,  
To the pre-eminent rank which, since your own  
Adventurous ardour, nobly triumphing,  
Has won for you.

*Par.* Yes, yes; and Michal's face  
Still wears that quiet and peculiar light,  
Like the dim circlet floating round a pearl?

*Fest.* Just so.

*Par.* And yet her calm sweet countenance,  
Though saintly, was not sad; for she would sing  
Alone . . . Does she still sing alone, bird-like,  
Not dreaming you are near? Her carols dropt  
In flakes through that old leafy bower built under  
The sunny wall at Würzburg, from her lattice  
Among the trees above, while I, unseen,  
Sate conning some rare scroll from Tritheim's shelves,  
Much wondering notes so simple could divert  
My mind from study. Those were happy days!  
Respect all such as sing when all alone.

*Fest.* Scarcely alone—her children, you may guess,  
Are wild beside her . . .

*Par.* Ah, those children quite  
Unsettle the pure picture in my mind:  
A girl—she was so perfect, so distinct . . .  
No change, no change! Not but this added grace  
May blend and harmonise with its compeers,  
And Michal may become her motherhood;  
But 'tis a change—and I detest all change,  
And most a change in aught I loved long since!  
So, Michal . . . you have said she thinks of me?

*Fest.* O very proud will Michal be of you!  
Imagine how we sate, long winter-nights,  
Scheming and wondering—shaping your presumed  
Adventures, or devising their reward;  
Shutting out fear with all the strength of hope.  
Though it was strange how, even when most secure  
In our domestic peace, a certain dim  
And flitting shade could sadden all; it seemed

## PARACELSUS

A restlessness of heart, a silent yearning,  
A sense of something wanting, incomplete—  
Not to be put in words, perhaps avoided  
By mute consent—but, said or unsaid, felt  
To point to one so loved and so long lost.  
And then the hopes rose and shut out the fears—  
How you would laugh should I recount them now!  
I still predicted your return at last,  
With gifts beyond the greatest vaunt of all,  
All Tritheim's wondrous troop; did one of which  
Attain renown by any chance, I smiled—  
As well aware of who would prove his peer.  
Michal was sure some woman, long ere this,  
As beautiful as you were sage, had loved . . .

*Par.* Far-seeing, truly, to discern so much  
In the fantastic projects and day-dreams  
Of a raw, restless boy!

*Fest.* Say, one whose sunrise  
Well warranted our faith in this full noon!  
Can I forget the anxious voice which said,  
“Festus, have thoughts like these e'er shaped them-  
selves

“In other brains than mine—have their possessors  
“Existed in like circumstance—were they weak  
“As I—or ever constant from the first,  
“Despising youth's allurements, and rejecting  
“As spider-films the shackles I endure?  
“Is there hope for me?”—and I answered grave  
As an acknowledged elder, calmer, wiser,  
More gifted mortal. O you must remember,  
For all your glorious . . .

*Par.* Glorious? ay, this hair,  
These hands—nay, touch them, they are mine! Recall  
With all the said recallings, times when thus  
To lay them by your own ne'er turned you pale,  
As now. Most glorious, are they not?

*Fest.* Why . . . why . . .  
Something must be subtracted from success  
So wide, no doubt. He would be scrupulous, truly,  
Who should object such drawbacks. Still, still, Aureole.

## PARACELSUS

You are changed — very changed! 'Twere losing  
nothing

To look well to it: you must not be stolen  
From the enjoyment of your well-won meed.

*Par.* My friend! you seek my pleasure, past a doubt:  
By talking, not of me, but of yourself,  
You will best gain your point.

*Fest.*

Have I not said

All touching Michal and my children? Sure  
You know, by this, full well how Aennchen looks  
Gravely, while one disparts her thick brown hair;  
And Aureole's glee when some stray gannet builds  
Amid the birch-trees by the lake. Small hope  
Have I that he will honour, the wild imp,  
His namesake! Sigh not! 'tis too much to ask  
That all we love should reach the same proud fate.  
But you are very kind to humour me  
By showing interest in my quiet life;  
You, who of old could never tame yourself  
To tranquil pleasures, must at heart despise . . .

*Par.* Festus, strange secrets are let out by Death,  
Who blabs so oft the follies of this world:  
And I am Death's familiar, as you know.  
I helped a man to die, some few weeks since,  
Warped even from his go-cart to one end—  
The living on princes' smiles, reflected from  
A mighty herd of favourites. No mean trick  
He left untried; and truly well nigh wormed  
All traces of God's finger out of him.  
Then died, grown old; and just an hour before—  
Having lain long with blank and soulless eyes—  
He sate up suddenly, and with natural voice  
Said, that in spite of thick air and closed doors  
God told him it was June; and he knew well,  
Without such telling, hare-bells grew in June;  
And all that kings could ever give or take  
Would not be precious as those blooms to him.  
Just so, allowing I am passing wise,  
It seems to me much worthier argument  
Why pansies, eyes that laugh, bear beauty's prize

## PARACELSUS

From violets, eyes that dream—(your Michal's choice)—  
Than all fools find to wonder at in me,  
Or in my fortunes: and be very sure  
I say this from no prurient restlessness—  
No self-complacency—itching to turn,  
Vary, and view its pleasure from all points,  
And, in this matter, willing other men  
Should argue and demonstrate to itself  
The realness of the very joy it tastes.  
What joy is better than the news of friends  
Whose memories were a solace to me oft,  
As mountain-baths to wild fowls in their flight?  
Yes, oft than you wasted thought on me  
If you were sage, and rightly valued bliss!  
But there's no taming nor repressing hearts:  
God knows I need such!—So you heard me speak?

*Fest.* Speak? when?

*Par.* When but this morning at my class?  
There was noise and crowd enough. I saw you not.  
Surely you know I am engaged to fill  
The chair here?—that 'tis part of my proud fate  
To lecture to as many thick-sculled youths  
As please, each day, to throng the theatre,  
To my great reputation, and no small  
Danger of Basil's benches, long unused  
To crack beneath such honour?

*Fest.* I was there;  
I mingled with the throng: shall I avow  
I had small care to listen?—too intent  
On gathering from the murmurs of the crowd  
A full corroboration of my hopes!  
What can I learn about your powers? but they  
Know, care for nought beyond your actual state—  
Your actual value; and yet worship you!  
Those various natures whom you sway as one!  
But ere I go, be sure I shall attend . . .

*Par.* Stop, o' God's name: the thing's by no means  
yet  
Past remedy! Shall I read this morning's work  
—At least in substance? Nought so worth the gaining

## PARACELSUS

As an apt scholar! Thus then, with all due  
Precision and emphasis—(you, besides, are clearly  
Guiltless of understanding a whit more  
The subject than your stool—allowed to be  
A notable advantage) . . .

*Fest.* Surely, Aureole,  
You laugh at me!

*Par.* I laugh? Ha, ha! thank heaven,  
I charge you, it's not so! for I forget  
Much—and what laughter should be like! No less,  
However, I forego that luxury,  
Since it alarms the friend who brings it back.  
True, laughter like my own must echo strange  
To thinking men; a smile were better far—  
So make me smile! If the exulting look  
You wore but now be smiling, 'tis so long  
Since I have smiled! Alas, such smiles are born  
Alone of hearts like yours, or shepherds old  
Of ancient time, whose eyes, calm as their flocks,  
Saw in the stars mere garnishry of heaven,  
In earth a stage for altars, nothing more.  
Never change, Festus: I say, never change!

*Fest.* My God, if he be wretched after all!

*Par.* When last we parted, Festus, you declared,  
—Or did your Michal's soft lips whisper words  
I have preserved? She told me she believed  
I should succeed (meaning, that in the search  
I then engaged in, I should meet success),  
And yet be wretched: now, she augured false.

*Fest.* Thank heaven! but you spoke strangely!  
could I venture

To think bare apprehension lest your friend,  
Dazzled by your resplendent course, might find  
Henceforth less sweetness in his own, awakes  
Such earnest mood in you? Fear not, dear friend,  
That I shall leave you, inwardly repining  
Your lot was not my own!

*Par.* And this, for ever!  
For ever! gull who may, they will be blind!  
They will not look nor think—'tis nothing new

## PARACELSUS

In them ; but surely he is not of them !  
My Festus, do you know, I reckoned, you—  
Though all beside were sand-blind—you, my friend,  
Would look at me, once close, with piercing eye,  
Untroubled by the false glare that confounds  
A weaker vision ; would remain serene,  
Though singular, amid a gaping throng.  
I feared you, or had come, sure, long ere this,  
To Einsiedeln. Well, error has no end,  
And Rhasis is a sage, and Basil boasts  
A tribe of wits, and I am wise and blest  
Past all dispute ! 'Tis vain to fret at it.  
I have vowed long since that my worshippers  
Shall owe to their own deep sagacity  
All further information, good or bad :  
And little risk my reputation runs,  
Unless perchance the glance now searching me  
Be fixed much longer—for it seems to spell,  
Dimly, the characters a simpler man  
Might read distinct enough. Old eastern books  
Say, the fallen prince of morning some short space  
Remained unchanged in feature—nay, his brow  
Seemed hued with triumph : every spirit then  
Praising ; *his* heart on flame the while :—a tale !  
Well, Festus, what discover you, I pray ?

*Fest.* Some foul deed sullies then a life which else  
Were raised supreme ?

*Par.* Good : I do well—most well !  
Why strive to make men hear, feel, fret themselves  
With what 'tis past their power to comprehend ?  
I would not strive now : only, having nursed  
The faint surmise that one yet walked the earth,  
One, at least, not the utter fool of show,  
Not absolutely formed to be the dupe  
Of shallow plausibilities alone ;  
One who, in youth found wise enough to choose  
The happiness his riper years approve,  
Was yet so anxious for another's sake,  
That, ere his friend could rush upon a course  
Mad, ruinous, the converse of his own,

## PARACELSUS

His gentler spirit essayed, prejudged for him  
The perilous path, foresaw its destiny,  
And warned the weak one in such tender words,  
Such accents—his whole heart in every tone—  
That oft their memory comforted that friend  
When rather it should have increased despair:  
—Having believed, I say, that this one man  
Could never lose the wisdom from the first  
His portion—how should I refuse to grieve  
At even my gain if it attest his loss,  
At triumph which so signally disturbs  
Our old relation, proving me more wise?  
Therefore, once more reminding him how well  
He prophesied, I note the single flaw  
That spoils his prophet's title: in plain words  
You were deceived, and thus were you deceived—  
I have not been successful, and yet am  
Most wretched: there—'tis said at last; but give  
No credit, lest you force me to concede  
That common sense yet lives upon the earth.

*Fest.* You surely do not mean to banter me?

*Par.* You know, or (if you have been wise enough  
To cleanse your memory of such matters) knew,  
As far as words of mine could make it clear,  
That 'twas my purpose to find joy or grief  
Solely in the fulfilment of my plan,  
Or plot, or whatsoe'er it was; rejoicing  
Alone as it proceeded prosperously,  
Sorrowing alone when any chance retarded  
Its progress. That was in those Würzburg days!  
Not to prolong a theme I thoroughly hate,  
I have pursued this plan with all my strength;  
And having failed therein most signally,  
Cannot object to ruin, utter and drear  
As all-excelling would have been the prize  
Had fortune favoured me. I scarce do right  
To vex your frank good spirit, late rejoiced  
By my supposed prosperity, I know,  
And, were I lucky in a glut of friends,  
Would well agree to let your error live,



## PARACELSUS

Nay, strengthen it with fables of success:  
But mine is no condition to refuse  
The transient solace of so rare a chance,  
My solitary luxury, my Festus—  
Accordingly I venture to put off  
The wearisome vest of falsehood galling me,  
Secure when he is by. I lay me bare,  
Prone at his mercy—but he is my friend!  
Not that he needs retain his aspect grave;  
That answers not my purpose; for 'tis like,  
Some sunny morning—Basil being drained  
Of its wise population, every corner  
Of the amphitheatre crammed with learned clerks,  
Here Ecolampadius, looking worlds of wit,  
Here Castellanus, as profound as he,  
Munsterus here, Frobenius there,—all squeezed,  
And staring, and expectant,—then, I say,  
'Tis like that the poor zany of the show,  
Your friend, will choose to put his trappings off  
Before them, bid adieu to cap and bells  
And motley with a grace but seldom judged  
Expedient in such cases:—the grim smile  
That will go round! It is not therefore best  
To venture a rehearsal like the present  
In a small way? Where are the signs I seek,  
The first-fruits and fair sample of the scorn  
Due to all quacks? Why, this will never do!

*Fest.* These are foul vapours, Aureole; nought  
beside!

The effect of watching, study, weariness.  
Were there a spark of truth in the confusion  
Of these wild words, you would not outrage thus  
Your youth's companion. I shall ne'er regard  
These wanderings, bred of faintness and much study.  
You would not trust a trouble thus to me,  
To Michal's friend.

*Par.* I have said it, dearest Festus!  
The manner is ungracious, probably;  
More may be told in broken sobs, one day,  
And scalding tears, ere long: but I thought best

## PARACELSUS

To keep that off as long as possible.

Do you wonder still?

*Fest.* No ; it must oft fall out  
That one whose labour perfects any work,  
Shall rise from it with eyes so worn, that he  
Of all men least can measure the extent  
Of what he has accomplished. He alone,  
Who, nothing tasked, is nothing weary too,  
Can clearly scan the little he effects :  
But we, the bystanders, untouched by toil,  
Estimate each aright.

*Par.* This worthy Festus  
Is one of them, at last ! 'Tis so with all !  
First, they set down all progress as a dream,  
And next, when he, whose quick discomfiture  
Was counted on, accomplishes some few  
And doubtful steps in his career,—behold,  
They look for every inch of ground to vanish  
Beneath his tread, so sure they judge success !

*Fest.* Few doubtful steps ? when death retires before  
Your presence—when the noblest of mankind,  
Broken in body, or subdued in mind,  
May through your skill renew their vigour, raise  
The shattered frame to pristine stateliness ?  
When men in racking pain may purchase dreams  
Of what delights them most—swooning at once  
Into a sea of bliss, or rapt along  
As in a flying sphere of turbulent light ?  
When we may look to you as one ordained  
To free the flesh from fell disease, as frees  
Our Luther's burning tongue the fettered soul ?  
When . . .

*Par.* Rather, when and where, friend, did you  
get  
This notable news ?

*Fest.* Even from the common voice ;  
From those whose envy, daring not dispute  
The wonders it decries, attributes them  
To magic and such folly.

*Par.* Folly ? Why not

## PARACELSUS

To magic, pray? You find a comfort doubtless  
In holding, God ne'er troubles him about  
Us or our doings: once we were judged worth  
The devil's tempting . . . I offend: forgive me,  
And rest content. Your prophecy on the whole  
Was fair enough as prophesyings go;  
At fault a little in detail, but quite  
Precise enough in the main; accordingly  
I pay due homage: you guessed long ago  
(The prophet!) I should fail—and I have failed.

*Fest.* You mean to tell me, then, the hopes which  
fed

Your youth have not been realised as yet?  
Some obstacle has barred them hitherto?  
Or that their innate . . .

*Par.* . . . As I said but now,  
You have a very decent prophet's fame,  
So you but shun details here. Little matters  
Whether those hopes were mad,—the aims they  
sought,

Safe and secure from all ambitious fools;  
Or whether my weak wits are overcome  
By what a better spirit would scorn: I fail.  
And now methinks 'twere best to change a theme,  
I am a sad fool to have stumbled on.  
I say confusedly what comes uppermost;  
But there are times when patience proves at fault,  
As now: this morning's strange encounter—you  
Beside me once again! you, whom I guessed  
Alive, since hitherto (with Luther's leave)  
No friend have I among the saints at rest,  
To judge by any good their prayers effect—  
I knew you would have helped me!—So would He,  
My strange competitor in enterprise,  
Bound for the same end by another path,  
Arrived, or ill or well, before the time,  
At our disastrous journey's doubtful close—  
How goes it with Aprile? Ah, your heaven  
Receives not into its beatitudes  
Mere martyrs for the world's sake; heaven shuts fast:

## PARACELSUS

The poor mad poet is howling by this time !  
Since you are my sole friend then, here or there,  
I could not quite repress the varied feelings  
This meeting wakens ; they have had their vent,  
And now forget them. Do the rear-mice still  
Hang like a fret-work on the gate (or what  
In my time was a gate) fronting the road  
From Einsiedeln to Lachen ?

*Fest.*

Trifle not !

Answer me—for my sake alone. You smiled  
Just now, when I supposed some deed, unworthy  
Yourself might blot the else so bright result ;  
Yet if your motives have continued pure,  
Your earnest will unfaltering, if you still  
Remain unchanged, and if, in spite of this,  
You have experienced a defeat that proves  
Your aims for ever unattainable—  
I say not, you would cheerfully resign  
The contest—mortal hearts are not so fashioned—  
But sure you would resign it ne'ertheless.  
You sought not fame, nor gain, nor even love ;  
No end distinct from knowledge,—I repeat  
Your very words : once satisfied that knowledge  
Is a mere dream, you would announce as much,  
Yourself the first. But how is the event ?  
You are defeated—and I find you here !

*Par.* As though “here” did not signify defeat !  
I spoke not of my little labours here—  
But of the break-down of my general aims :  
That you, aware of their extent and scope,  
Should look on these sage lecturings, approved  
By beardless boys, and bearded dotards,—these  
As a fit consummation of such aims,  
Is worthy notice ! A professorship  
At Basil ! Since you see so much in it,  
And think my life was reasonably drained  
Of life's delights to render me a match  
For duties arduous as such post demands,—  
Far be it from me to deny my power  
To fill the petty circle lotted out

## PARACELSUS

From infinite space, or justify the host  
Of honours thence accruing : so, take notice,  
This jewel dangling from my neck preserves  
The features of a prince, my skill restored  
To plague his people some few years to come :  
And all through a pure whim. He had eased the  
earth

For me, but that the droll despair which seized  
The vermin of his household, tickled me.  
I came to see : here, drivelled the physician,  
Whose most infallible nostrum was at fault ;  
There quaked the astrologer, whose horoscope  
Had promised him interminable years ;  
Here a monk fumbled at the sick man's mouth  
With some undoubted relic—a sudary  
Of the Virgin ; while some other dozen knaves  
Of the same brotherhood (he loved them ever)  
Were actively preparing 'neath his nose  
Such a suffumigation as, once fired,  
Had stunk the patient dead ere he could groan.  
I cursed the doctor, and upset the brother ;  
Brushed past the conjuror ; vowed that the first gust  
Of stench from the ingredients just alight  
Would raise a cross-grained devil in my sword,  
Not easily laid ; and ere an hour, the prince  
Slept as he never slept since prince he was.  
A day—and I was posting for my life,  
Placarded through the town as one whose spite  
Had near availed to stop the blessed effects  
Of the doctor's nostrum, which, well seconded  
By the sudary, and most by the costly smoke—  
Not leaving out the strenuous prayers sent up  
Hard by, in the abbey—raised the prince to life ;  
To the great reputation of the seer,  
Who, confident, expected all along  
The glad event—the doctor's recompense—  
Much largess from his highness to the monks—  
And the vast solace of his loving people,  
Whose general satisfaction to increase,  
The prince was pleased no longer to defer

## PARACELSUS

The burning of some dozen heretics,  
Remanded 'till God's mercy should be shown  
Touching his sickness, as a prudent pledge  
To make it surer: last of all were joined  
Ample directions to all loyal folk  
To swell the complement, by seizing me  
Who—doubtless some rank sorcerer—had endeavoured  
To thwart these pious offices, obstruct  
The prince's cure, and frustrate Heaven, by help  
Of certain devils dwelling in his sword.  
By luck, the prince in his first fit of thanks  
Had forced this bauble on me as an earnest  
Of further favours. This one case may serve  
To give sufficient taste of many such,  
So let them pass: those shelves support a pile  
Of patents, licenses, diplomas, titles,  
From Germany, France, Spain, and Italy:  
They authorise some honour: ne'ertheless,  
I set more store by this Erasmus sent;  
He trusts me; our Frobenius is his friend,  
And him "I raised" (nay, read it) "from the  
dead" . . .

I weary you, I see; I merely sought  
To show, there's no great wonder after all  
That while I fill the class room, and attract  
A crowd to Basil, I get leave to stay;  
And therefore need not scruple to accept  
The utmost they can offer—if I please:  
For 'tis but right the world should be prepared  
To treat with favour e'en fantastic wants  
Of one like me, used up in serving her.  
Just as the mortal, whom the Gods in part  
Devoured, received in place of his lost limb  
Some virtue or other—cured disease, I think;  
You mind the fables we have read together.

*Fest.* You do not think I comprehend a word:  
The time was, Aureole, you were apt enough  
To clothe the airiest thoughts in specious breath;  
But surely you must feel how vague and strange  
These speeches sound.

## PARACELSUS

*Par.* Well, then: you know my hopes; -  
I am assured, at length, those hopes were vain;  
That truth is just as far from me as ever;  
That I have thrown my life away; that sorrow  
On that account is vain, and further effort  
To mend and patch what's marred beyond repairing.  
As useless: and all this was taught to me  
By the convincing, good old-fashioned method  
Of force—by sheer compulsion. Is that plain?

*Fest.* Dear Aureole! you confess my fears were just?  
God wills not . . .

*Par.* Now, 'tis this I most admire—  
The constant talk men of your stamp keep up  
Of God's will, as they style it; one would swear  
Man had but merely to uplift his eye,  
To see the will in question characterized  
On the heaven's vault. 'Tis hardly wise to moot  
Such topics: doubts are many and faith is weak.  
I know as much of any will of God's,  
As knows some dumb and tortured brute what Man,  
His stern lord, wills from the perplexing blows  
That plague him every way, and there, of course,  
Where least he suffers, longest he remains—  
My case; and for such reasons I plod on,  
Subdued, but not convinced. I know as little  
Why I deserve to fail, as why I hoped  
Better things in my youth. I simply know  
I am no master here, but trained and beaten  
Into the path I tread; and here I stay,  
Until some further intimation reach me,  
Like an obedient drudge: though I prefer  
To view the whole thing as a task imposed,  
Which, whether dull or pleasant, must be done—  
Yet, I deny not, there is made provision  
Of joys which tastes less jaded might affect;  
Nay, some which please me too, for all my pride—  
Pleasures that once were pains: the iron ring  
Festering about a slave's neck grows at length  
Part of the flesh it eats. I hate no more  
A host of petty, vile delights, undreamed of

## PARACELSUS

Or spurned, before; such now supply the place  
Of my dead aims: as in the autumn woods  
Where tall trees used to flourish, from their roots  
Springs up a fungous brood, sickly and pale,  
Chill mushrooms, coloured like a corpse's cheek.

*Fest.* If I interpret well what words I seize,  
It troubles me but little that your aims,  
Vast in their dawning, and most likely grown  
Extravagantly since, have baffled you.  
Perchance I am glad; you merit greater praise;  
Because they are too glorious to be gained,  
You do not blindly cling to them and die;  
You fell, but have not sullenly refused  
To rise, because an angel worsted you  
In wrestling, though the world holds not your peer  
And though too harsh and sudden is the change  
To yield content as yet—still, you pursue  
The ungracious path as though 'twere rosy-strewn.  
'Tis well: and your reward, or soon or late,  
Will come from Him whom no man serves in vain.

*Par.* Ah, very fine! For my part, I conceive  
The very pausing from all further toil,  
Which you find heinous, would be as a seal  
To the sincerity of all my deeds.  
To be consistent I should die at once;  
I calculated on no after-life;  
Yet (how crept in, how fostered, I know not)  
Here am I with as passionate regret  
For youth, and health, and love so vainly lost,  
As if their preservation had been first  
And foremost in my thoughts; and this strange fact  
Humbled me wondrously, and had due force  
In rendering me the more disposed to follow  
A certain counsel, a mysterious warning—  
You will not understand—but 'twas a man  
With aims not mine, but yet pursued like mine.  
With the same fervor and no more success,  
Who perished in my sight; but summoned me  
As I would shun the ghastly fate I saw,  
To serve my race at once; to wait no longer



## PARACELSUS

'Till God should interfere in my behalf,  
And let the next world's knowledge dawn on this;  
But to distrust myself, put pride away,  
And give my gains, imperfect as they were,  
To men. I have not leisure to explain  
How since, a strange succession of events  
Has raised me to the station you behold,  
Wherein I seem to turn to most account  
The mere wreck of the past,—perhaps receive  
Some feeble glimmering token that God views  
And may approve my penance: therefore here  
You find me—doing most good or least harm:  
And if folks wonder much and profit little  
'Tis not my fault; only, I shall rejoice  
When my part in the farce is shuffled through,  
And the curtain falls; I must hold out 'till then.

*Fest.* 'Till when, dear Aureole?

*Par.* 'Till I'm fairly thrust

From my proud eminence. Fortune is fickle  
And even professors fall: should that arrive,  
I see no sin in ceding to my bent.  
You little fancy what rude shocks apprise us  
We sin: God's intimations rather fail  
In clearness than in energy: 'twere well  
Did they but indicate the course to take  
Like that to be forsaken. I would fain  
Be spared a further sample! Here I stand,  
And here I stay, be sure, till forced to flit.

*Fest.* Remain but firm on that head; long ere then  
All I expect will come to pass, I trust:  
The cloud that wraps you will have disappeared.  
Meantime, I see small chance of such event:  
They praise you here as one whose lore, divulged  
Already, eclipses all the past can show,  
But whose achievements, marvellous as they be,  
Are faint anticipations of a glory  
About to be revealed. When Basil's crowds  
Dismiss their teacher, I shall be content  
That he depart.

*Par.* This favour at their hands

## PARACELSUS

I look for earlier than your view of things  
Would warrant. Of the crowd you saw to-day  
Remove the full half sheer amazement draws,  
The novelty, nought else; and next, the tribe  
Whose innate blockish dullness just perceives  
That unless miracles (as seem my works)  
Be wrought in their behalf, their chance is slight  
To puzzle the devil; next, the numerous set  
Who bitterly hate established schools, so help  
The teacher that oppugns them, and o'erthrows,  
'Till having planted his own doctrine, he  
May reckon on their rancour in his turn;  
Take, too, the sprinkling of sagacious knaves  
Whose cunning runs not counter to the vogue,  
But seeks, by flattery and nursing craft,  
To force my system to a premature  
Short-lived development . . . Why swell the list?  
Each has his end to serve, and his best way  
Of serving it: remove all these, remains  
A scantling—a poor dozen at the best—  
'That really come to learn for learning's sake;  
Worthy to look for sympathy and service,  
And likely to draw profit from my pains.

*Fest.* 'Tis no encouraging picture: still these few  
Redeem their fellows. Once implant the germ,  
Its growth, if slow, is sure.

*Par.* God grant it so!  
I would make some amends: but if I fail,  
The luckless rogues have this excuse to urge,  
That much is in my method and my manner,  
My uncouth habits, my impatient spirit,  
Which hinders of reception and result  
My doctrine: much to say, small skill to speak!  
Those old aims suffered not a looking-off,  
Though for an instant; therefore, only when  
I thus renounced them and resolved to reap  
Some present fruit—to teach mankind some truth  
So dearly purchased—only then I found  
Such teaching was an art requiring cares  
And qualities peculiar to itself;

## PARACELSUS

That to possess was one thing—to display,  
Another. Had renown been in my thoughts,  
Or popular praise, I had soon discovered it!  
One grows but little apt to learn these things.

*Fest.* If it be so, which nowise I believe,  
There needs no waiting fuller dispensation  
To leave a labour to so little use:  
Why not throw up the irksome charge at once?

*Par.* A task, a task! . . .

But wherefore hide from you

The whole extent of degradation, once  
Engaged in the confession? Spite of all  
My fine talk of obedience, and repugnance,  
Docility, and what not, 'tis yet to learn  
If when the old task really is performed,  
And my will free once more, to choose a new,  
I shall do aught but slightly modify  
The nature of the hated one I quit.  
In plain words, I am spoiled: my life still tends  
As first it tended. I am broken and trained  
To my old habits; they are part of me.  
I know, and none so well, my darling ends  
Are proved impossible: no less, no less,  
Even now what humours me, fond fool, as when  
Their faint ghosts sit with me, and flatter me,  
And send me back content to my dull round?  
How can I change this soul?—this apparatus  
Constructed solely for their purposes  
So well adapted to their every want,  
To search out and discover, prove and perfect;  
This intricate machine, whose most minute,  
Least obvious motions have their charm to me  
Though to none else—an aptitude I seize,  
An object I perceive, a use, a meaning,  
A property, a fitness, I explain,  
And I alone:—how can I change my soul?  
And this wronged body, worthless save when tasked  
Under that soul's dominion—used to care  
For its bright master's cares, and quite subdue  
Its proper cravings—not to ail, nor pine,

## PARACELSUS

So the soul prosper—whither drag this poor,  
Tried, patient body? God! how I essayed,  
To live like that mad poet, for awhile,  
To catch Aprile's spirit, as I hoped,  
And love alone! and how I felt too warped  
And twisted and deformed! what should I do,  
Even tho' released from drudgery, but return  
Faint, as you see, and halting. blind and sore,  
To my old life—and die as I begun!  
I cannot feed on beauty, for the sake  
Of beauty only; nor can drink in balm  
From lovely objects for their loveliness;  
My nature cannot lose her first intent;  
I still must hoard, and heap, and class all truths  
With one ulterior purpose: I must know!  
Would God translate me to his throne, believe  
That I should only listen to his words  
To further my own aims! For other men,  
Beauty is prodigally strewn around,  
And I were happy could I quench as they  
This mad and thriveless longing, be content  
With beauty for itself alone: alas!  
I have addressed a frock of heavy mail,  
Yet may not join the troop of sacred knights;  
And now the forest-creatures fly from me,  
The grass-banks cool, the sunbeams warm no more!  
Best follow, dreaming that ere night arrives  
I shall o'ertake the company, and ride  
Glittering as they!

*Fest.* I think I apprehend  
What you would say: if you, in truth, design  
To enter once more on the life thus left,  
Seek not to hide that all this consciousness  
Of failure is assumed.

*Par.* My friend, my friend,  
I speak, you listen; I explain, perhaps  
You understand: there our communion ends.  
Have you learnt nothing from to-day's discourse?  
When we would thoroughly know the sick man's state  
We feel awhile the fluttering pulse, press soft

## PARACELSUS

The hot brow, look upon the languid eye,  
And thence divine the rest. Must I lay bare  
My heart, hideous and beating, or tear up  
My vitals for your gaze, ere you will deem  
Enough made known? You! who are you, forsooth?  
That is the crowning operation claimed  
By the arch-demonstrator—heaven the hall,  
And earth the audience. Let Aprile and you  
Secure good places—'twill be worth your while.

*Fest.* Are you mad, Aureole? What can I have said  
To call for this? I judged from your own words.

*Par.* Oh, true! A fevered wretch describes the ape  
That mocks him from the bed-foot, and you turn  
All gravely thither at once: or he recounts  
The perilous journey he has late performed,  
And you are puzzled much how that could be!  
You find me here, half stupid and half mad:  
It makes no part of my delight to search  
Into these things, much less to undergo  
Another's scrutiny; but so it chances  
That I am led to trust my state to you:  
And the event is, you combine, contrast,  
And ponder on my foolish words, as though  
They thoroughly conveyed all hidden here—  
Here, loathsome with despair, and hate, and rage!  
Is there no fear, no shrinking, or no shame?  
Will you guess nothing? will you spare me nothing?  
Must I go deeper? Aye or no?

*Fest.* . . . Dear friend . . .

*Par.* True: I am brutal—'tis a part of it;  
The plague's sign—you are not a lazar-haunter,  
How should you know? Well then, you think it strange  
I should profess to have failed utterly,  
And yet propose an ultimate return  
To courses void of hope: and this, because  
You know not what temptation is, nor how  
'Tis like to ply men in the sickliest part.  
You are to understand, that we who make  
Sport for the gods, are hunted to the end:  
There is not one sharp volley shot at us,

## PARACELSUS

Which if we manage to escape with life,  
Though touched and hurt, we straight may slacken  
pace

And gather by the way-side herbs and roots  
To staunch our wounds, secure from further harm—  
No: we are chased to life's extremest verge.  
It will be well indeed if I return,  
A harmless busy fool, to my old ways!  
I would forget hints of another fate,  
Significant enough, which silent hours  
Have lately scared me with.

*Fest.* Another! and what?

*Par.* After all, Festus, you say well: I stand  
A man yet—I need never humble me.  
I would have been—something, I know not what:  
But though I cannot soar, I do not crawl:  
There are worse portions than this one of mine;  
You say well!

*Fest.* Ah! . . .

*Par.* And deeper degradation!  
If the mean stimulants of vulgar praise,  
And vanity, should become the chosen food  
Of a sunk mind; should stifle even the wish  
To find its early aspirations true;  
Should teach it to breathe falsehood like life-breath—  
An atmosphere of craft, and trick, and lies;  
Should make it proud to emulate or surpass  
Base natures in the practices which woke  
Its most indignant loathing once . . . No, no!  
Utter damnation is reserved for Hell!  
I had immortal feelings—such shall never  
Be wholly quenched—no, no! .

My friend, you wear  
A melancholy face, and truth to speak,  
There's little cheer in all this dismal work;  
But 'twas not my desire to set abroad  
Such memories and forebodings. I foresaw  
Where they would drive; 'twere better you detailed  
News of Lucerne or Zurich; or I described  
Great Egypt's flaring sky, or Spain's cork-groves.

## PARACELSUS

*Fest.* I have thought now: yes, this mood will pass  
away.

I know you, and the lofty spirit you bear,  
And easily ravel out a clue to all.  
These are the trials meet for such as you,  
Nor must you hope exemption: to be mortal  
Is to be plied with trials manifold.  
Look round! The obstacles which kept the rest  
Of men from your ambition, you have spurned;  
Their fears, their doubts, the chains that bind them best,  
Were flax before your resolute soul, which nought  
Avails to awe, save these delusions, bred  
From its own strength, its selfsame strength, disguised—  
Mocking itself. Be brave, dear Aureole! Since  
The rabbit has his shade to frighten him,  
The fawn his rustling bough, mortals their cares,  
And higher natures yet their power to laugh  
At these entangling fantasies, as you  
At trammels of a weaker intellect.  
Measure your mind's height by the shade it casts!  
I know you.

*Par.* And I know you, dearest Festus!  
And how you love unworthily; and how  
All admiration renders blind.

*Fest.* You hold  
That admiration blinds?

*Par.* Aye, and alas!

*Fest.* Nought blinds you less than admiration will.  
Whether it be that all love renders wise  
In its degree; from love which blends with love—  
Heart answering heart—to love which spends itself  
In silent mad idolatry of some  
Pre-eminent mortal, some great soul of souls,  
Which ne'er will know how well it is adored:—  
I say, such love is never blind; but rather  
Alive to every the minutest spot  
Which mars its object, and which hate (supposed  
So vigilant and searching) dreams not of:  
Love broods on such: what then? When first perceived  
Is there no sweet strife to forget, to change,

## PARACELSUS

To overflush those blemishes with all  
The glow of general goodness they disturb?  
—To make those very defects an endless source  
Of new affection grown from hopes and fears?  
And, when all fails, is there no gallant stand  
Made even for much proved weak? no shrinking-back  
Lest, rising even as its idol sinks,  
It nearly reach the sacred place, and stand  
Almost a rival of that idol? Trust me,  
If there be fiends who seek to work our hurt,  
To ruin and drag down earth's mightiest spirits,  
Even at God's foot, 'twill be from such as love,  
Their zeal will gather most to serve their cause;  
And least from those who hate, who most essay  
By contumely and scorn to blot the light  
Which will have entrance even to their hearts;  
For thence will our Defender tear the veil  
And show within each heart, as in a shrine,  
The giant image of Perfection, grown  
In hate's despite, whose calunnies were spawned  
In the untroubled presence of its eyes!  
True admiration blinds not; nor am I  
So blind: I call your sin exceptional;  
It springs from one whose life has passed the bounds  
Prescribed to life. Compound that fault with God!  
I speak of men; to common men like me  
The weakness you confess endears you more—  
Like the far traces of decay in suns:  
I bid you have good cheer!

*Par.*

*Præclare! Optimè!*

Think of a quiet mountain-cloistered priest  
Instructing Paracelsus! yet, 'tis so.  
Come, I will show you where my merit lies.  
'Tis in the advance of individual minds  
That the slow crowd should ground their expectation  
Eventually to follow—as the sea  
Waits ages in its bed, 'till some one wave  
Out of the multitude aspires, extends  
The empire of the whole, some feet perhaps,  
Over the strip of sand which would confine



## PARACELSUS

Its fellows so long time : thenceforth the rest,  
Even to the meanest, hurry in at once,  
And so much is clear gained. I shall be glad  
If all my labours, failing of aught else,  
Suffice to make such inroad, and procure  
A wider range for thought : nay, they do this ;  
For, whatsoe'er my notions of true knowledge  
And a legitimate success, may be,  
I am not blind to my undoubted rank  
When classed with others : I precede my age :  
And whoso wills, is very free to mount  
These labours as a platform, whence their own  
May have a prosperous outset : but, alas !  
My followers—they are noisy as you heard,  
But for intelligence—the best of them  
So clumsily wield the weapons I supply  
And they extol, that I begin to doubt  
Whether their own rude clubs and pebble-stones  
Would not do better service than my arms  
Thus vilely swayed—if error will not fall  
Sooner before the old awkward batterings  
Than my more subtle warfare, not half learned.

*Fest.* I would supply that art, then, and withhold  
Its arms until you have taught their mystery.

*Par.* Content you, 'tis my wish ; I have recourse  
To the simplest training. Day by day I seek  
To wake the mood, the spirit which alone  
Can make those arms of any use to men.  
Of course, they are for swaggering forth at once  
Graced with Ulysses' club, Achilles' shield—  
Flash on us, all in armour, thou Achilles !  
Make our hearts dance to thy resounding step !  
A proper sight to scare the crows away !

*Fest.* Pity you choose not, then, some other method  
Of coming at your point. The marvellous art  
At length established in the world bids fair  
To remedy all hindrances like these :  
Trust to Frobenius' press the precious lore  
Obscured by uncouth manner, or unfit  
For raw beginners ; let his types secure

## PARACELSUS

A deathless monument to after-times;  
Meanwhile wait confidently and enjoy  
The ultimate effect: sooner or later,  
You shall be all-revealed.

Par.

## The old dull question

In a new form; no more. Thus: I possess  
Two sorts of knowledge; one,—vast, shadowy,  
Hints of the unbounded aim I once pursued:  
The other consists of many secrets, learned  
While bent on nobler prize,—perhaps a few  
First principles which may conduct to much:  
These last I offer to my followers here.  
Now bid me chronicle the first of these,  
My ancient study, and in effect you bid me  
Revert to the wild courses just abjured:  
I must go find them scattered through the world.  
Then, for the principles, they are so simple  
(Being chiefly of the overturning sort),  
That one time is as proper to propound them  
As any other—to-morrow at my class,  
Or half a century hence embalmed in print:  
For if mankind intend to learn at all,  
They must begin by giving faith to them,  
And acting on them; and I do not see  
But that my lectures serve indifferent well:  
No doubt these dogmas fall not to the earth,  
For all their novelty and rugged setting.  
I think my class will not forget the day  
I let them know the gods of Israel,  
Aëtius, Oribasius, Galen, Rhasis,  
Serapion, Avicenna, Averröes,—  
Were blocks!

Fest

*Fest*        And that reminds me, I heard something  
About your waywardness: you burned their books,  
It seems, instead of answering those sages.

*Par.* And who said that?

Fest

*Fest*                                Some I met yesternight  
With Ecolampadius. As you know, the purpose  
Of this short stay at Basil was to learn  
His pleasure touching certain missives sent

## PARACELSUS

For our Zuinglius and himself. 'Twas he  
Apprized me that the famous teacher here  
Was my old friend.

*Par.* Ah, I forgot; you went . . .

*Fest.* From Zurich with advices for the ear  
Of Luther, now at Wittemburg—(you know,  
I make no doubt, the differences of late  
With Carolostadius)—and returning sought  
Basil and . . .

*Par.* I remember. Here's a case, now,  
Will teach you why I answer not, but burn  
The books you mention: pray, does Luther dream  
His arguments convince by their own force  
The crowds that own his doctrine? No, indeed:  
His plain denial of established points  
Ages had sanctified and men supposed  
Could never be oppugned while earth was under  
And heaven above them—points which chance, or time  
Affected not—did more than the array  
Of argument which followed. Boldly deny!  
There is much breath-stopping, hair-stiffening  
Awhile; then, amazed glances, mute awaiting  
The thunderbolt which does not come; and next,  
Reproachful wonder and enquiry: those  
Who else had never stirred, are able now  
To find the rest out for themselves—perhaps  
To outstrip him who set the whole at work,  
—As never will my wise class its instructor.  
And you saw Luther?

*Fest.* 'Tis a wondrous soul!

*Par.* True: the so-heavy chain which galled mankind  
Is shattered, and the noblest of us all  
Must bow to the deliverer—nay, the worker  
Of our own projects—we who long before  
Had burst its trammels, but forgot the crowd,  
We should have taught, still groaned beneath the load:  
This he has done and nobly. Speed that may!  
Whatever be my chance or my despair,  
What benefits mankind must glad me too:  
And men seem made, though not as I believed,

## PARACELSUS

For something better than the times produce:  
Witness these gangs of peasants your new lights  
From Suabia have possessed, whom Munzer leads,  
And whom the duke, the landgrave, and the elector  
Will calm in blood! Well, well—'tis not my world!

*Fest.* Hark!

*Par.* 'Tis the melancholy wind astir  
Within the trees; the embers too are grey,  
Morn must be near.

*Fest.* Best ope the casement: see,  
The night, late strewn with clouds and flying stars,  
Is blank and motionless: how peaceful sleep  
The tree-tops all together! Like an asp,  
The wind slips whispering from bough to bough.

*Par.* Ay; you would gaze on a wind-shaken tree  
By the hour, nor count time lost.

*Fest.* So you shall gaze:  
Those happy times will come again . . .

*Par.* Gone! gone!  
Those pleasant times! Does not the moaning wind  
Seem to bewail that we have gained such gains  
And bartered sleep for them?

*Fest.* It is our trust  
That there is yet another world to mend  
All error and mischance.

*Par.* Another world!  
And why this world, this common world, to be  
A make-shift, a mere foil, how fair soever,  
To some fine life to come? Man must be fed  
With angel's food, forsooth; and some few traces,  
Of a diviner nature which look out  
Through his corporeal baseness, warrant him  
In a supreme contempt for all provision  
For his inferior tastes—some straggling marks  
Which constitute his essence, just as truly  
As here and there a gem would constitute  
The rock, their barren bed, a diamond.  
But were it so—were man all mind—he gains  
A station little enviable. From God  
Down to the lowest spirit ministrant,

## PARACELSUS

Intelligence exists which casts our mind  
Into immeasurable shade. No, no:  
Love, hope, fear, faith—these make humanity;  
'These are its signs and note, and character;  
And these I have lost!—gone, shut from me for ever,  
Like a dead friend, safe from unkindness more!  
See morn at length. The heavy darkness seems  
Diluted; grey and clear without the stars;  
The shrubs bestir and rouse themselves, as if  
Some snake that weighed them down all night, let go  
His hold; and from the east, fuller and fuller  
Day, like a mighty river, is flowing in;  
But clouded, wintry, desolate, and cold:  
Yet see how that broad, prickly, star-shaped plant,  
Half down in the crevice, spreads its woolly leaves,  
All thick and glistening with diamond dew.  
And you depart for Einsiedeln this day:  
And we have spent all night in talk like this!  
If you would have me better for your love,  
Revert no more to these sad themes.

*Fest.*

One favour,

And I have done. I leave you, deeply moved;  
Unwilling to have fared so well, the while  
My friend has changed so sorely: if this mood  
Shall pass away—if light once more arise  
Where all is darkness now—if you see fit  
To hope, and trust again, and strive again;  
You will remember—not our love alone—  
But that my faith in God's desire for man  
To trust on his support, (as I must think  
You trusted,) is obscured and dim through you;  
For you are thus, and this is no reward.  
Will you not call me to your side, dear friend?

# PARACELSUS

## IV. PARACELSUS ASPIRES

SCENE *A House at Colmar, in Alsatia.* 1528

PARACELSUS, FESTUS

*Par.* (To John Oporinus, his secretary.) *Sic itur ad astra!* Dear Von Visenburg  
Is scandalised, and poor Torinus paralysed,  
And every honest soul that Basil holds  
Aghast; and yet we live, as one may say,  
Just as though Liechtenfels had never set  
So true a value on his sorry carcass,  
And learned Pütter had not frowned us dumb.  
We live; and shall as surely start to-morrow  
For Nuremburg, as we drink speedy scathe  
To Basil in this mantling wine, suffused  
With a delicate blush—no fainter tinge is born  
I' th' shut heart of a bud: pledge me, good John—  
“Basil; a hot plague ravage it, with Pütter  
“To stop the plague!” Even so? Do you too share  
Their panic—the reptiles? Ha, ha! faint through  
*them,*  
Desist for *them!*—while means enough exist  
To bow the stoutest braggart of the tribe  
Once more in crouching silence—means to breed  
A stupid wonder in each fool again,  
Now big with admiration at the skill  
Which stript a vain pretender of his plumes;  
And, that done, means to brand each slavish brow  
So deeply, surely, ineffaceably,  
That thenceforth flattery shall not pucker it  
Out of the furrow of that hideous stamp  
Which shows the next they fawn on, what they are,  
This Basil with its magnates one and all,  
Whom I curse soul and limb. And now dispatch,  
Dispatch my trusty John; and what remains  
To do, whate'er arrangements for our trip  
Are yet to be completed, see you hasten

## PARACELSUS

This night; we'll weather the storm at least: to-morrow

For Nuremburg! Now leave us; this grave clerk  
Has divers weighty matters for my ear, (*Oporinus goes out*)

And spare my lungs. At last, my gallant Festus,  
I am rid of this arch-knave that follows me  
As a gaunt crow a gasping sheep; at last  
May give a loose to my delight. How kind,  
How very kind, my first, best, only friend!  
Why this looks like fidelity. Embrace me:  
Not a hair silvered yet! Right: you shall live  
Till I am worth your love; you shall be proud,  
And I—but let time show. Did you not wonder?  
I sent to you because our compact weighed  
Upon my conscience—(you recal the night  
At Basil, which the gods confound)—because  
Once more I aspire! I call you to my side;  
You come. You thought my message strange?

*Fest.* So strange

That I must hope, indeed, your messenger  
Has mingled his own fancies with the words  
Purporting to be yours.

*Par.* He said no more,  
'Tis probable, than the precious folks I leave  
Said fifty-fold more roughly. Well-a-day,  
'Tis true; poor Paracelsus is exposed  
At last; a most egregious quack he proves,  
And those he overreached must spit their hate  
On one who, utterly beneath contempt,  
Could yet deceive their topping wits. You heard  
Bare truth; and at my bidding you come here  
To speed me on my enterprise, as once  
Your lavish wishes sped me, my own friend?

*Fest.* What is your purpose, Aureole?

*Par.* Oh, for purpose,  
There is no lack of precedents in a case  
Like mine; at least, if not precisely mine,  
The case of men cast off by those they sought  
To benefit . . .

## PARACELSUS

*Fest.* They really cast you off?

I only heard a vague tale of some priest,  
Cured by your skill, who wrangled at your claim,  
Knowing his life's worth best; and how the judge  
The matter was referred to, saw no cause  
To interfere, nor you to hide your full  
Contempt of him; nor he, again, to smother  
His wrath thereat, which raised so fierce a flame  
That Basil soon was made no place for you.

*Par.* The affair of Liechtenfels? the shallowest  
cause,

The last and silliest outrage—mere pretence!  
I knew it, I foretold it from the first,  
How soon the stupid wonder you mistook  
For genuine loyalty—a cheering promise  
Of better things to come—would pall and pass;  
And every word comes true. Saul is among  
The prophets! Just so long as I was pleased  
To play off the mere marvels of my art—  
Fantastic gambols leading to no end—  
I got huge praise; but one can ne'er keep down  
Our foolish nature's weakness: there they flocked,  
Poor devils, jostling, swearing, and perspiring,  
Till the walls rang again; and all for me!  
I had a kindness for them, which was right;  
But then I stopped not till I tacked to that  
A trust in them and a respect—a sort  
Of sympathy for them: I must needs begin  
To teach them, not amaze them; "to impart  
"The spirit which should instigate the search  
"Of truth:" just what you bade me! I spoke out.  
Forthwith a mighty squadron, in disgust,  
Filed off—"the sifted chaff of the sack," I said,  
Redoubling my endeavours to secure  
The rest; when lo! one man had stayed thus long  
Only to ascertain if I supported  
This tenet of his, or that; another loved  
To hear impartially before he judged,  
And having heard, now judged; this bland disciple  
Passed for my dupe, but all along, it seems,



## PARACELSUS

Spied error where his neighbours marvelled most :  
That fiery doctor who had hailed me friend,  
Did it because my bye-paths, once proved wrong  
And beaconed properly, would commend again  
The good old ways our sires jogged safely o'er,  
Though not their squeamish sons; the other worthy  
Discovered divers verses of St. John,  
Which, read successively, refreshed the soul,  
But, muttered backwards, cured the gout, the stone,  
The cholic, and what not :—*quid multa?* The end  
Was a clear class-room, with a quiet leer  
From grave folk, and a sour reproachful glance  
From those in chief, who, cap in hand, installed  
The new professor scarce a year before ;  
And a vast flourish about patient merit  
Obscured awhile by flashy tricks, but sure  
Sooner or later to emerge in splendour—  
Of which the example was some luckless wight  
Whom my arrival had discomfited,  
But now, it seems, the general voice recalled  
To fill my chair, and so efface the stain  
Basil had long incurred. I sought no better—  
Nought but a quiet dismissal from my post ;  
While from my heart I wished them better suited,  
And better served. Good night to Basil, then !  
But fast as I proposed to rid the tribe  
Of my obnoxious back, I could not spare them  
The pleasure of a parting kick.

*Fest.*

You smile :

Despise them as they merit !

*Par.*

If I smile,

'Tis with as very contempt as ever turned  
Flesh into stone : this courteous recompense ;  
This grateful . . . Festus, were your nature fit  
To be defiled, your eyes the eyes to ache  
At gangrened blotches, eating poisonous blains,  
The ulcered barky scurf of leprosy  
Which finds—a man, and leaves—a hideous thing  
That cannot but be mended by hell fire,  
—I say that, could you see as I could show,

## PARACELSUS

I would lay bare to you these human hearts  
Which God cursed long ago, and devils make since  
Their pet nest and their never-tiring home.

O, sages have discovered we are born  
For various ends—to love, to know: has ever  
One stumbled, in his search, on any signs  
Of a nature in him formed to hate? To hate?  
If that be our true object which evokes  
Our powers in fullest strength, be sure 'tis hate!

*Fest.* But I have yet to learn your purpose,  
Aureole!

*Par.* What purpose were the fittest now for me?  
Decide! To sink beneath such ponderous shame—  
To shrink up like a crushed snail—undergo  
In silence and desist from further toil,  
And so subside into a monument  
Of one their censure blasted; or to bow  
Cheerfully as submissively—to lower  
My old pretensions even as Basil dictates—  
To drop into the rank her wits assign me,  
And live as they prescribe, and make that use  
Of my poor knowledge which their rules allow—  
Proud to be patted now and then, and careful  
To practise the true posture for receiving  
The amplest benefit from their hoofs' appliance,  
When they shall condescend to tutor me.  
Then one may feel resentment like a flame,  
Prompting to deck false systems in Truth's garb,  
And tangle and entwine mankind with error,  
And give them darkness for a dower, and falsehood  
For a possession: or one may mope away  
Into a shade through thinking; or else drowse  
Into a dreamless sleep, and so die off:  
But I, but I—now Festus shall divine!  
—Am merely setting out in life once more,  
Embracing my old aims! What thinks he now?

*Fest.* Your aims? the aims?—to know? and where  
is found

The early trust . . .

*Par.* Nay, not so fast; I say,

## PARACELSUS

The aims—not the old means. You know what made  
me

A laughing-stock ; I was a fool ; you know  
The when and the how : hardly those means again !  
Not but they had their beauty—who should know  
Their passing beauty, if not I ? But still  
They were dreams, so let them vanish : yet in beauty,  
If that may be. Stay—thus they pass in song !

(*He sings.*)

Heap cassia, sandal-buds, and stripes  
Of labdanum, and aloe-balls  
Smeared with dull nard an Indian wipes  
From out her hair : (such balsam falls  
Down sea-side mountain pedestals,  
From summits where tired winds are faint,  
Spent with the vast and howling main,  
To treasure half their island-gain.)

And strew faint sweetness from some old  
Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud,  
Which breaks to dust when once unrolled ;  
And shred dim perfume, like a cloud  
From chamber long to quiet vowed,  
With moth'd and dropping arras hung,  
Mouldering the lute and books among  
Of queen, long dead, who lived there young.

Mine, every word !—and on such pile shall die  
My lovely fancies, with fair perished things,  
Themselves fair and forgotten ; yes, forgotten,  
Or why abjure them ? So I made this rhyme  
That fitting dignity might be preserved :  
No little proud was I ; though the list of drugs  
Smacks of my old vocation, and the verse  
Halts like the best of Luther's psalms !

*Fest.*

But, Aureole,

Talk not thus wildly and madly. I am here—  
Did you know all, indeed ! I have travelled far  
To learn your wishes. Be yourself again !

## PARACELSUS

For in this mood I recognize you less  
Than in the horrible despondency  
I witnessed last. You may account this, joy ;  
But rather let me gaze on that despair  
Than hear these incoherent words, and see  
This flushed cheek and intensely-sparkling eye !

*Par.* Why, man, I was light-hearted in my prime,  
I am light-hearted now ; what would you have ?  
Aprile was a poet, I make songs—

'Tis the very augury of success I want !  
Why should I not be joyous now as then ?

*Fest.* Joyous ! and how ? and what remains for joy ?  
You have declared the ends (which I am sick  
Of naming) are impracticable.

*Par* *Aye,*  
Pursued as I pursued them—the arch-fool !  
Listen : my plan will please you not, 'tis like ;  
But you are little versed in the world's ways.  
This is my plan—(first drinking its good luck)—  
I will accept all helps ; all I despised  
So rashly at the outset, equally  
With early impulses, late years have quenched :  
I have tried each way singly—now for both !  
All helps—no one sort shall exclude the rest.  
I seek to KNOW and to ENJOY at once,  
Not one without the other as before.  
Suppose my labour should seem God's own cause  
Once more, as first I dreamed, it shall not balk me  
Of the meanest, earthliest, sensualest delight  
That may be snatched ; for every joy is gain,  
And why spurn gain, however small ? My soul  
Can die then, nor be taunted “ what was gained ? ”  
Nor, on the other hand, if pleasure meets me  
As though I had not spurned her hitherto,  
Shall she o'ercloud my spirit's rapt communion  
With the tumultuous past, the teeming future,  
Glorious with visions of a full success !

*Fest.* Success !

*Par.* And wherefore not ? Why not prefer  
Results obtained in my best state of being,

## PARACELSUS

To those derived alone from seasons dark  
As the thoughts they bred? When I was best—my  
youth

Unwasted—seemed success not surest too?  
It is the nature of darkness to obscure.  
I am a wanderer: I remember well  
One journey, how I feared the track was missed,  
So long the city I desired to reach  
Lay hid; when suddenly its spires afar  
Flashed through the circling clouds; conceive my  
joy!

Too soon the vapours closed o'er it again,  
But I had seen the city, and one such glance  
No darkness could obscure: nor shall the present  
A few dull hours, a passing shame or two,  
Destroy the vivid memories of the past.  
I will fight the battle out!—a little tired,  
Perhaps—but still an able combatant.  
You look at my grey hair and furrowed brow?  
But I can turn even weakness to account:  
Of many tricks I know, 'tis not the least  
To push the ruins of my frame, whereon  
The fire of vigour trembles scarce alive,  
Into a heap, and send the flame aloft!  
What should I do with age? so sickness lends  
An aid; it being, I fear, the source of all  
We boast of: mind is nothing but disease,  
And natural health is ignorance.

*Fest.*

I see

But one good symptom in this notable plan:  
I feared your sudden journey had in view  
To wreak immediate vengeance on your foes;  
'Tis not so: I am glad.

*Par.*

And if I pleased

To spit on them, to trample them, what then?  
'Tis sorry warfare truly, but the fools  
Provoke it: I had spared their self-conceit,  
But if they must provoke me—cannot suffer  
Forbearance on my part—if I may keep  
No quality in the shade, must needs put forth

## PARACELSUS

Power to match power, my strength against their  
strength,  
And teach them their own game with their own  
arms—

Why be it so, and let them take their chance!  
I am above them like a God—in vain  
To hide the fact—what idle scruples, then,  
Were those that ever bade me soften it,  
Communicate it gently to the world,  
Instead of proving my supremacy,  
Taking my natural station o'er their heads,  
Then owning all the glory was a man's,  
And in my elevation man's would be!  
But live and learn, though life's short; learning, hard!  
Still, one thing I have learned—not to despair:  
And therefore, though the wreck of my past self,  
I fear, dear Pütter, that your lecture-room  
Must wait awhile for its best ornament,  
The penitent empiric, who set up  
For somebody, but soon was taught his place—  
Now, but too happy to be let confess  
His error, snuff the candles, and illustrate  
(*Fiat experientia corpore vili*)  
Your medicine's soundness in his person. Wait,  
Good Pütter!

*Fest.* He who sneers thus, is a God!

*Par.* Ay, ay, laugh at me! I am very glad  
You are not gulled by all this swaggering; you  
Can see the root of the matter!—how I strive  
To put a good face on the overthrow  
I have experienced, and to bury and hide  
My degradation in its length and breadth;  
How the mean motives I would make you think  
Just mingle as is due with nobler aims,  
The appetites I modestly allow  
May influence me—as I am mortal still—  
Do goad me, drive me on, and fast supplant  
My youth's desires: you are no stupid dupe;  
You find me out! Yes, I had sent for you  
To palm these childish lies upon you, Festus!

## PARACELSUS

Laugh—you shall laugh at me!

*Fest.* The past, then, Aureole,  
Proves nothing? Is our interchange of love  
Yet to begin? Have I to swear I mean  
No flattery in this speech or that? For you,  
Whate'er you say, there is no degradation,  
These low thoughts are no inmates of your mind;  
Or wherefore this disorder? You are vexed  
As much by the intrusion of base views,  
Familiar to your adversaries, as they  
Were troubled should your qualities alight  
Amid their murky souls: not otherwise,  
A stray wolf which the winter forces down  
From our bleak hills, suffices to affright  
A village in the vales—while foresters  
Sleep calm though all night long the famished troop  
Snuff round and scratch against their crazy huts:  
These evil thoughts are monsters, and will flee.

*Par.* May you be happy, Festus, my own friend!

*Fest.* Nay, further; the delights you fain would  
think

The superseders of your nobler aims,  
Though ordinary and harmless stimulants,  
Will ne'er content you . . . .

*Par.* Hush! I once despised them  
But that soon passes: we are high at first  
In our demands, nor will abate a jot  
Of toil's strict value; but time passes o'er,  
And humbler spirits accept what we refuse;  
In short, when some such comfort is doled out  
As these delights, we cannot long retain  
The bitter contempt which urges us at first  
To hurl it back, but hug it to our breast  
And thankfully retire. This life of mine  
Must be lived out, and a grave thoroughly earned:  
I am just fit for that and nought beside.  
I told you once, I cannot now Enjoy,  
Unless I deem my knowledge gains through joy;  
Nor can I Know, but straight warm tears reveal  
My need of linking also joy to knowledge:

## PARACELSUS

So on I drive—enjoying all I can,  
And knowing all I can. I speak, of course,  
Confusedly; this will better explain—feel here!  
Quick beating, is it not?—a fire of the heart  
To work off somehow, this as well as any!  
So, Festus sees me fairly launched; his calm  
Compassionate look might have disturbed me once,  
But now, far from rejecting, I invite  
What bids me press the closer, lay myself  
Open before him, and be soothed with pity;  
And hope, if he command hope; and believe  
As he directs me—satiating myself  
With his enduring love: and Festus quits me  
To give place to some credulous disciple  
Who holds that God is wise, but Paracelsus  
Has his peculiar merits. I suck in  
That homage, chuckle o'er that admiration,  
And then dismiss the fool; for night is come,  
And I betake myself to study again,  
Till patient searchings after hidden lore  
Half wring some bright truth from its prison; my  
frame

Trembles, my forehead's veins swell out, my hair  
Tingles for triumph! Slow and sure the morn  
Shall break on my pent room, and dwindling lamp,  
And furnace dead, and scattered earths and ores,  
When, with a failing heart and throbbing brow,  
I must review my captured truth, sum up  
Its value, trace what ends to what begins,  
Its present power with its eventual bearings,  
Latent affinities, the views it opens,  
And its full length in perfecting my scheme;  
I view it sternly circumscribed, cast down  
From the high place my fond hopes yielded it,  
Proved worthless—which, in getting, yet had cost  
Another wrench to this fast-falling frame;  
Then, quick, the cup to quaff, that chases sorrow!  
I lapse back into youth, and take again  
Mere hopes of bliss for proofs that bliss will be,  
—My fluttering pulse, for evidence that God



## PARACELSUS

Means good to me, will make my cause his own ;  
See! I have cast off this remorseless care  
Which clogged a spirit born to soar so free,  
And my dim chamber has become a tent,  
Festus is sitting by me, and his Michal . . .  
Why do you start? I say, she listening here,  
(For yonder's Würzburg through the orchard-boughs)  
Motions as though such ardent words should find  
No echo in a maiden's quiet soul,  
But her pure bosom heaves, her eyes fill fast  
With tears, her sweet lips tremble all the while!  
Ha, ha!

*Fest.* It seems, then, you expect to reap  
No unreal joy from this your present course,  
But rather . . .

*Par.* Death! To die! I owe that much  
To what, at least, I was. I should be sad  
To live contented after such a fall—  
To thrive and fatten after such reverse!  
The whole plan is a makeshift, but will last  
My time.

*Fest.* And you have never mused and said,  
"I had a noble purpose, and full strength  
"To compass it; but I have stopped half-way,  
"And wrongly give the first fruits of my toil  
"To objects little worthy of the gift:  
"Why linger round them still? why clench my  
fault?

"Why seek for consolation in defeat—  
"In vain endeavours to derive a beauty  
"From ugliness? Why seek to make the most  
"Of what no power can change, nor strive instead  
"With mighty effort to redeem the past,  
"And, gathering up the treasures thus cast down,  
"To hold a steadfast course till I arrive  
"At their fit destination, and my own?"  
You have never pondered thus?

*Par.* Have I, you ask?  
Often at midnight, when most fancies come,  
Would some such airy project visit me :

## PARACELSUS

But ever at the end . . . or will you hear  
The same thing in a tale, a parable?  
It cannot prove more tedious; listen then!  
You and I, wandering over the world wide,  
Chance to set foot upon a desert coast:  
Just as we cry, "No human voice before  
Broke the inveterate silence of these rocks!"  
—Their querulous echo startles us; we turn:  
What ravaged structure still looks o'er the sea?  
Some characters remain, too! While we read,  
The sharp, salt wind, impatient for the last  
Of even this record, wistfully comes and goes,  
Or sings what we recover, mocking it.  
This is the record; and my voice, the wind's.

*(He sings.)*

Over the sea our galleys went,  
With cleaving prows in order brave,  
To a speeding wind and a bounding wave—

A gallant armament:

Each bark built out of a forest-tree,  
Left leafy and rough as first it grew,  
And nailed all over the gaping sides,  
Within and without, with black-bull hides,  
Seethed in fat and suppled in flame,  
To bear the playful billows' game;  
So each good ship was rude to see,  
Rude and bare to the outward view,

But each upbore a stately tent;  
Where cedar-pales in scented row  
Kept out the flakes of the dancing brine:  
And an awning drooped the mast below,  
In fold on fold of the purple fine,  
That neither noon-tide, nor star-shine,  
Nor moonlight cold which maketh mad,

Might pierce the regal tenement.  
When the sun dawned, oh, gay and glad  
We set the sail and plied the oar;  
But when the night-wind blew like breath  
For joy of one day's voyage more,

## PARACELSUS

We sang together on the wide sea,  
Like men at peace on a peaceful shore;  
Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,  
Each helm made sure by the twilight star,  
And in a sleep as calm as death,  
We, the strangers from afar,

Lay stretched along, each weary crew  
In a circle round its wondrous tent,  
Whence gleamed soft light and curled rich scent,  
And with light and perfume, music too:  
So the stars wheeled round, and the darkness past,  
And at morn we started beside the mast,  
And still each ship was sailing fast!

One morn, the land appeared!—a speck  
Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky—  
Avoid it, cried our pilot, check

The shout, restrain the longing eye!  
But the heaving sea was black behind  
For many a night and many a day,  
And land, though but a rock, drew nigh;  
So we broke the cedar pales away,  
Let the purple awning flap in the wind,  
And a statue bright was on every deck!  
We shouted, every man of us,  
And steered right into the harbour thus,  
With pomp and pcean glorious.

An hundred shapes of lucid stone!

All day we built a shrine for each—  
A shrine of rock for every one—  
Nor paused we till in the westering sun

We sate together on the beach  
To sing, because our task was done;  
When lo! what shouts and merry songs!  
What laughter all the distance stirs!  
What raft comes loaded with its throngs  
Of gentle islanders?

“The isles are just at hand,” they cried;  
“Like cloudlets faint at even sleeping,

## PARACELSUS

“Our temple-gates are opened wide,  
“Our olive-groves thick shade are keeping  
“For the lucid shapes you bring”—they cried.  
Oh, then we woke with sudden start  
From our deep dream; we knew, too late,  
How bare the rock, how desolate,  
To which we had flung our precious freight:  
Yet we called out—“Depart!  
“Our gifts, once given, must here abide:  
“Our work is done; we have no heart  
“To mar our work, though vain”—we cried.

*Fest.* In truth?

*Par.* Nay, wait: all this in tracings faint  
May still be read on that deserted rock,  
On rugged stones, strewn here and there, but piled  
In order once; then follows—mark what follows—  
“The sad rhyme of the men who proudly clung  
“To their first fault, and withered in their pride!”

*Fest.* Come back, then, Aureole; as you fear God,  
come!

This is foul sin; come back: renounce the past,  
Forswear the future; look for joy no more,  
But wait death's summons amid holy sights,  
And trust me for the event—peace, if not joy!  
Return with me to Einsiedeln, dear Aureole.

*Par.* No way, no way: it would not turn to good.  
A spotless child sleeps on the flowering moss—  
’Tis well for him; but when a sinful man,  
Envyng such slumber, may desire to put  
His guilt away, shall he return at once  
To rest by lying there? Our sires knew well  
(Spite of the grave discoveries of their sons)  
The fitting course for such; dark cells, dim lamps,  
A stone floor one may writhe on like a worm;  
No mossy pillow, blue with violets!

*Fest.* I see no symptom of these absolute  
And tyrannous passions. You are calmer now.  
This verse-making can purge you well enough,  
Without the terrible penance you describe.

## PARACELSUS

You love me still : the lusts you fear, will never  
Outrage your friend. To Einsiedeln, once more !  
Say but the word !

*Par.* No, no ; those lusts forbid :  
They crouch, I know, cowering with half-shut eye  
Beside you ; 'tis their nature. Thrust yourself  
Between them and their prey ; let some fool style me  
Or king or quack, it matters not, and try  
Your wisdom then, at urging their retreat !  
No, no ; learn better and look deeper, Festus !  
If you knew how a devil sneers within me  
While you are talking now of this, now that,  
As though we differed scarcely save in trifles !

*Fest.* Do we so differ ? True, change must proceed,  
Whether for good or ill ; keep from me, which !  
God made you and knows what you may become—  
Do not confide all secrets : I was born  
To hope, and you . . .

*Par.* To trust : you know the fruits !

*Fest.* Listen : I do believe, what you call trust  
Was self-reliance at the best : for, see !  
So long as God would kindly pioneer  
A path for you, and screen you from the world,  
Procure you full exemption from man's lot,  
Man's common hopes and fears, on the mere pretext  
Of your engagement in his service—yield you  
A limitless license, make you God, in fact,  
And turn your slave—you were content to say  
Most courtly praises ! What is it, at last,  
But selfishness without example ? None  
Could trace God's will so plain as you, while yours  
Remained implied in it ; but now you fail,  
And we, who prate about that will, are fools !  
In short, God's service is established here  
As he determines fit, and not your way,  
And this you cannot brook ! Such discontent  
Is weak. Renounce all creatureship at once !  
Affirm an absolute right to have and use  
Your energies ; as though the rivers should say—  
“ We rush to the ocean ; what have we to do

## PARACELSUS

“With feeding streamlets, lingering in the marshes,  
“Sleeping in lazy pools?” Set up that plea,  
That will be bold at least!

*Par.* Perhaps, perhaps!  
Your only serviceable spirits are those  
The east produces:—lo, the master nods,  
And they raise terraces, spread garden-grounds  
In one night's space; and, this done, straight begin  
Another century's sleep, to the great praise  
Of him that framed them wise and beautiful,  
Till a lamp's rubbing, or some chance akin,  
Wake them again. I am of different mould.  
I would have soothed my lord, and slaved for him,  
And done him service past my narrow bond,  
And thus I get rewarded for my pains!  
Beside, 'tis vain to talk of forwarding  
God's glory otherwise; this is alone  
The sphere of its increase, as far as men  
Increase it; why, then, look beyond this sphere?  
We are his glory; and if we be glorious,  
Is not the thing achieved?

*Fest.* Shall one like me  
Judge hearts like yours? Though years have changed  
you much,  
And you have left your first love, and retain  
Its empty shade to veil your crooked ways,  
Yet I still hold that you have honoured God;  
And who shall call your course without reward?  
For, wherefore this repining at defeat,  
Had triumph ne'er inured you to high hopes?  
I urge you to forsake the life you curse,  
And what success attends me?—simply talk  
Of passion, weakness, and remorse; in short,  
Any thing but the naked truth: you choose  
This so-despised career, and rather praise  
Than take my happiness, or other men's.  
Once more, return!

*Par.* And soon. Oporinus  
Has pilfered half my secrets by this time:  
And we depart by day-break. I am weary,

## PARACELSUS

I know not how ; not even the wine-cup soothes  
My brain to-night . . .  
Do you not thoroughly despise me, Festus?  
No flattery ! One like you, needs not be told  
We live and breathe deceiving and deceived.  
Do you not scorn me from your heart of hearts?  
Me and my cant—my petty subterfuges—  
My rhymes, and all this frothy shower of words—  
My glozing, self-deceit—my outward crust  
Of lies, which wrap, as tetter, morphew, furfair  
Wrap the sound flesh ?—so, see you flatter not !  
Why, even God flatters ! but my friend, at least,  
Is true. I would depart, secure henceforth  
Against all further insult, hate, and wrong  
From puny foes : my one friend's scorn shall brand  
me—

No fear of sinking deeper !

*Fest.* No, dear Aureole !

No, no ; I came to counsel faithfully :  
There are old rules, made long ere we were born,  
By which I judge you. I, so fallible,  
So infinitely low beside your spirit  
Mighty, majestic !—even I can see  
You own some higher law than ours which call  
Sin, what is no sin—weakness, what is strength ;  
But I have only these, such as they are,  
To guide me ; and I blame you where they blame,  
Only so long as blaming promises  
To win peace for your soul ; the more, that sorrow  
Has fallen on me of late, and they have helped me  
So that I faint not under my distress.  
But wherefore should I scruple to avow  
In spite of all, as brother judging brother,  
Your fate to me is most inexplicable :  
And should you perish without recompense  
And satisfaction yet—too hastily  
I have relied on love : you may have sinned,  
But you have loved. As a mere human matter—  
As I would have God deal with fragile men  
In the end—I say that you will triumph yet !

## PARACELSUS

*Par.* Have you felt sorrow, Festus?—'tis because  
You love me. Sorrow, and sweet Michal yours!  
Well thought on; never let her know this last  
Dull winding-up of all: these miscreants dared  
Insult me—me she loved; so grieve her not.

*Fest.* Your ill success can little grieve her now.

*Par.* Michal is dead! pray Christ we do not craze!

*Fest.* Aureole, dear Aureole, look not on me thus!  
Fool, fool! this is the heart grown sorrow-proof—  
I cannot bear those eyes.

*Par.* Nay, really dead?

*Fest.* 'Tis scarce a month . . .

*Par.* Stone dead!—then you have laid her  
Among the flowers ere this. Now, do you know,  
I can reveal a secret which shall comfort  
Even you. I have no julep, as men think,  
To cheat the grave; but a far better secret.  
Know then, you did not ill to trust your love  
To the cold earth: I have thought much of it:  
For I believe we do not wholly die.

*Fest.* Aureole . . .

*Par.* Nay, do not laugh; there is a reason  
For what I say: I think the soul can never  
Taste death. I am, just now, as you may see,  
Very unfit to put so strange a thought  
In an intelligible dress of words;  
But take it as my trust, she is not dead.

*Fest.* But not on this account alone? you surely,  
—Aureole, you have believed this all along?

*Par.* And Michal sleeps among the roots and dews,  
While I am moved at Basil, and full of schemes  
For Nuremberg, and hoping and despairing,  
As though it mattered how the farce plays out,  
So it be quickly played. Away, away!  
Have your will, rabble! while we fight the prize,  
Troop you in safety to the snug back-seats,  
And leave a clear arena for the brave  
About to perish for your sport!—Behold!



# PARACELSUS

## V. PARACELSUS ATTAINS

SCENE *A cell in the Hospital of St. Sebastian, at  
Salzburg. 1541*

FESTUS, PARACELSUS

*Fest.* No change! The weary night is well nigh  
spent,

The lamp burns low, and through the casement-bars  
Grey morning glimmers feebly—yet no change!  
Another night, and still no sigh has stirred  
That fallen discoloured mouth, no pang relit  
Those fixed eyes, quenched by the decaying body,  
Like torch-flame choked in dust: while all beside  
Was breaking, to the last they held out bright,  
As a strong-hold where life intrenched itself;  
But they are dead now—very blind and dead.  
He will drowse into death without a groan!

My Aureole—my forgotten, ruined Aureole!  
The days are gone, are gone! How grand thou wert:  
And now not one of those who struck thee down—  
Poor, glorious spirit—concerns him even to stay  
And satisfy himself his little hand  
Could turn God's image to a livid thing.  
Another night, and yet no change! 'Tis much  
That I should sit by him, and bathe his brow,  
And chafe his hands—'tis much; but he will sure  
Know me, and look on me, and speak to me  
Once more—but only once! His hollow cheek  
Looked all night long as though a creeping laugh  
At his own state were just about to break  
From the dying man: my brain swam, my throat  
swelled,

And yet I could not turn away. In truth,  
They told me how, when first brought here, he seemed  
Resolved to live—to lose no faculty;  
Thus striving to keep up his shattered strength,

## PARACELSUS

Until they bore him to this stifling cell:  
When straight his features fell—an hour made white  
The flushed face and relaxed the quivering limb;  
Only the eye remained intense awhile,  
As though it recognised the tomb-like place;  
And then he lay as here he lies.

Ay, here!

Here is earth's noblest, nobly garlanded—  
Her bravest champion, with his well-won meed—  
Her best achievement, her sublime amends  
For countless generations, fleeting fast  
And followed by no trace;—the creature-god  
She instances when angels would dispute  
The title of her brood to rank with them—  
Angels, this is our angel!—those bright forms  
We clothe with purple, crown and call to thrones,  
Are human, but not his: those are but men  
Whom other men press round and kneel before—  
Those palaces are dwelt in by mankind;  
Higher provision is for him you seek  
Amid our pomps and glories: see it here!  
Behold earth's paragon! Now, raise thee, clay!

God! Thou art Love! I build my faith on that!  
Even as I watch beside thy tortured child,  
Unconscious whose hot tears fall fast by him,  
So doth thy right hand guide us through the world  
Wherein we stumble. God! what shall we say?  
How has he sinned? How else should he have done?  
Surely he sought thy praise—thy praise, for all  
He might be busied by the task so much  
As to forget awhile its proper end.  
Dost thou well, Lord? Thou canst not but prefer  
That I should range myself upon his side—  
How could he stop at every step to set  
Thy glory forth? Hadst Thou but granted him  
Success, thy honour would have crowned success,  
A halo round a star. Or, say he erred,—  
Save him, dear God; it will be like thee: bathe him  
In light and life! Thou art not made like us;

## PARACELSUS

We should be wroth in such a case; but Thou  
Forgivest—so, forgive these passionate thoughts,  
Which come unsought, and will not pass away!  
I know thee, who hast kept my path, and made  
Light for me in the darkness—tempering sorrow  
So that it reached me like a solemn joy;  
It were too strange that I should doubt thy love:  
But what am I? Thou madest him, and knowest  
How he was fashioned. I could never err  
That way: the quiet place beside thy feet,  
Reserved for me, was ever in my thoughts;  
But he—Thou shouldst have favoured him as well!

Ah! he wakes! Aureole, I am here—'tis Festus!  
I cast away all wishes save one wish—  
Let him but know me—only speak to me!  
He mutters—louder and louder; any other  
Than I, with brain less laden, could collect  
What he pours forth. Dear Aureole, do but look!  
Is it talking or singing this he utters fast?  
Misery, that he should fix me with his eye—  
Quick talking to some other all the while!  
If he would husband this wild vehemence,  
Which frustrates its intent!—I heard, I know  
I heard my name amid those rapid words:  
O he will know me yet! Could I divert  
This current—lead it somehow gently back  
Into the channels of the past!—His eye,  
Brighter than ever! It must recognise!

Let me speak to him in another's name.  
I am Erasmus: I am here to pray  
That Paracelsus use his skill for me.  
The schools of Paris and of Padua send  
These questions for your learning to resolve.  
We are your students, noble master: leave  
This wretched cell; what business have you here?  
Our class awaits you; come to us once more.  
(O agony! the utmost I can do  
Touches him not; how else arrest his ear?)

## PARACELSUS

I am commissioned . . . I shall craze like him—  
Better be mute, and see what God shall send.

*Par.* Stay, stay with me!

*Fest.* I will; I am come here  
To stay with you—Festus, you loved of old;  
Festus, you know, you must know!

*Par.* Festus! Where's  
Aprile, then? Has he not chaunted softly  
The melodies I heard all night? I could not  
Get to him for a cold hand on my breast,  
But I made out his music well enough,  
O, well enough! If they have filled him full  
With magical music, as they freight a star  
With light, and have remitted all his sin,  
They will forgive me too, I too shall know!

*Fest.* Festus, your Festus!

*Par.* Ask him if Aprile  
Knows as he Loves—if I shall Love and Know?  
I try; but that cold hand, like lead—so cold!

*Fest.* My hand, see!

*Par.* Ah, the curse, Aprile, Aprile!  
We get so near—so very, very near!  
'Tis an old tale: Jove strikes the Titans down  
Not when they set about their mountain-piling,  
But when another rock would crown their work!  
And Phaeton—doubtless his first radiant plunge  
Astonished mortals; though the gods were calm,  
And Jove prepared his thunder: all old tales!

*Fest.* And what are these to you?

*Par.* Ay, fiends must laugh  
So cruelly, so well; most like I never  
Could tread a single pleasure under foot,  
But they were grinning by my side, were chuckling  
To see me toil, and drop away by flakes!  
Hell-spawn! I am glad, most glad, that thus I fail!  
You that hate men and all who wish their good—  
Your cunning has o'ershot its aim. One year,  
One month, perhaps, and I had served your turn!  
You should have curbed your spite awhile. But now,  
Who will believe 'twas you that held me back?

## PARACELSUS

Listen : there's shame, and hissing, and contempt,  
And none but laughs who names me—none but spits  
Measureless scorn upon me—me alone,  
The quack, the cheat, the liar,—all on me !  
And thus your famous plan to sink mankind  
In silence and despair, by teaching them  
One of their race had probed the inmost truth,  
Had done all man could do, yet failed no less—  
Your wise plan proves abortive. Men despair?  
Ha, ha ! why they are hooting the empiric,  
The ignorant and incapable fool who rushed  
Madly upon a work beyond his wits ;  
Nor doubt they but the simplest of themselves  
Could bring the matter to triumphant issue !  
So pick and choose among them all, Accursed !  
Try now, persuade some other to slave for you,  
To ruin body and soul to work your ends :  
No, no ; I am the first and last, I think !

*Fest.* Dear friend ; who are accursed ? who has  
done . . .

*Par.* What have I done ? Fiends dare ask that ?  
or you,

Brave men ? Oh, you can chime in boldly, backed  
By the others ! What had you to do, sage peers ?  
Here stand my rivals, truly—Arab, Jew,  
Greek, join dead hands against me : all I ask  
Is, that the world enrol my name with theirs,  
And even this poor privilege, it seems,  
They range themselves, prepared to disallow !  
Only observe : why fiends may learn from them !  
How they talk calmly of my throes—my fierce  
Aspirings, terrible watchings—each one claiming  
Its price of blood and brain ; how they dissect  
And sneeringly disparage the few truths  
Got at a life's cost ; they too hanging the while  
About my neck, their lies misleading me,  
And their dead names brow-beating me ! Grey crew,  
Yet steeped in fresh malevolence from hell,  
Is there a reason for your hate ? My truths  
Have shaken a little the palm about each head ?

## PARACELSUS

Just think, Aprile, all these leering dotards  
Were bent on nothing less than being crowned  
As we! That yellow blear-eyed wretch in chief,  
To whom the rest cringe low with feigned respect—  
Galen, of Pergamos and hell; nay speak  
The tale, old man! We met there face to face:  
I said the crown should fall from thee: once more  
We meet as in that ghastly vestibule:  
Look to my brow! Have I redeemed my pledge?

*Fest.* Peace, peace; ah, see!

*Par.* Oh, emptiness of fame  
Oh Persic Zoroaster, lord of stars!  
—Who said these old renowns, dead long ago,  
Could make me overlook the living world  
To gaze through gloom at where they stood, indeed,  
But stand no longer? What a warm light life  
After the shade! In truth, my delicate witch,  
My serpent-queen, you did but well to hide  
The juggles I had else detected. Fire  
May well run harmless o'er a breast like yours!  
The cave was not so darkened by the smoke  
But that your white limbs dazzled me: Oh, white,  
And panting as they twinkled, wildly dancing!  
I cared not for your passionate gestures then,  
But now I have forgotten the charm of charms,  
The foolish knowledge which I came to seek,  
While I remember that quaint dance; and thus  
I am come back, not for those mummeries,  
But to love you, and to kiss your little feet,  
Soft as an ermine's winter coat!

*Fest.* A sense

Will struggle through these thronging words at last,  
As in the angry and tumultuous west  
A soft star trembles through the drifting clouds.  
These are the strivings of a spirit which hates  
So sad a vault should coop it, and calls up  
The past to stand between it and its fate:  
Were he at Einsiedeln—or Michal here!

*Par.* Cruel! I see her now—I kneel—I shriek—  
I clasp her vesture—but she fades, still fades;

## PARACELSUS

And she is gone; sweet human love is gone!  
'Tis only when they spring to heaven that angels  
Reveal themselves to you; they sit all day  
Beside you, and lie down at night by you.  
Who care not for their presence—muse or sleep—  
And all at once they leave you and you know them!  
We are so fooled, so cheated! Why, even now  
I am not too secure against foul play:  
The shadows deepen, and the walls contract—  
No doubt some treachery is going on!  
'Tis very dusk. Where are we put, Aprile?  
Have they left us in the lurch? This murky, loath-

~~some~~

Death-trap—this slaughter-house—is not the hall  
In the golden city! Keep by me, Aprile!  
There is a hand groping amid the blackness  
To catch us. Have the spider-fingers got you,  
Poet? Hold on me for your life; if once  
They pull you!—Hold!

'Tis but a dream—no more.

I have you still—the sun comes out again;  
Let us be happy—all will yet go well!  
Let us confer: is it not like, Aprile,  
That spite of trouble, this ordeal passed,  
The value of my labours ascertained,  
Just as some stream foams long among the rocks  
But after glideth glassy to the sea,  
So, full content shall henceforth be my lot?  
What think you, poet? Louder! Your clear voice  
Vibrates too like a harp-string. Do you ask  
How could I still remain on earth, should God  
Grant me the great approval which I seek?  
I, you, and God can comprehend each other,  
But men would murmur, and with cause enough;  
For when they saw me, stainless of all sin,  
Preserved and sanctified by inward light,  
They would complain that comfort, shut from them,  
I drank thus unespied; that they live on,  
Nor taste the quiet of a constant joy,  
For ache, and care, and doubt, and weariness,

## PARACELSUS

While I am calm; help being vouchsafed to me,  
And hid from them!—"Twere best consider that!  
You reason well, Aprile; but at least  
Let me know this, and die! Is this too much?  
I will learn this, if God so please, and die!

If thou shalt please, dear God, if thou shalt please!  
We are so weak, we know our motives least  
In their confused beginning: if at first  
I sought . . . But wherefore bare my heart to thee?  
I know thy mercy; and already thoughts  
Flock fast about my soul to comfort it,  
And intimate I cannot wholly fail,  
For love and praise would clasp me willingly  
Could I resolve to seek them: Thou art good,  
And I should be content; yet—yet first show  
I have done wrong in daring! Rather give  
The supernatural consciousness of strength  
That fed my youth—one only hour of that  
With thee to help—O what should bar me then!

Lost, lost! Thus things are ordered here! God's  
creatures,  
And yet he takes no pride in us!—none, none!  
Truly there needs another life to come!  
If this be all—(I must tell Festus that)  
And other life await us not—for one,  
I say 'tis a poor cheat, a stupid bungle,  
A wretched failure. I, for one, protest  
Against it—and I hurl it back with scorn!

Well, onward though alone: small time remains,  
And much to do: I must have fruit, must reap  
Some profit from my toils. I doubt my body  
Will hardly serve me through: while I have laboured  
It has decayed; and now that I demand  
Its best assistance, it will crumble fast:  
A sad thought—a sad fate! How very full  
Of wormwood 'tis, that just at altar-service,  
The rapt hymn rising with the rolling smoke,



## PARACELSUS

When glory dawns, and all is at the best—  
The sacred fire may flicker, and grow faint,  
And die, for want of a wood-piler's help!  
Thus fades the flagging body, and the soul  
Is pulled down in the overthrow: well, well—  
Let men catch every word—let them lose nought  
Of what I say; something may yet be done.

They are ruins! Trust me who am one of you!  
All ruins—glorious once, but lonely now.  
It makes my heart sick to behold you crouch  
Beside your desolate fane; the arches dim,  
The crumbling columns grand against the moon:  
Could I but rear them up once more—but that  
May never be, so leave them! Trust me, friends,  
Why should you linger here when I have built  
A far resplendent temple, all your own?  
Trust me, they are but ruins! See, Aprile,  
Men will not heed! Yet were I not prepared  
With better refuge for them, tongue of mine  
Should ne'er reveal how blank their dwelling is;  
I would sit down in silence with the rest.

Ha, what? you spit at me, you grin and shriek  
Contempt into my ear—my ear which drank  
God's accents once? you curse me? Why men, men,  
I am not formed for it! Those hideous eyes  
Follow me sleeping, waking, praying God,  
And will not let me even die: spare, spare me,  
Sinning or no, forget that, only spare me  
That horrible scorn; you thought I could support it,  
But now you see what silly fragile creature  
Cowers thus. I am not good nor bad enough,  
Not Christ, nor Cain, yet even Cain was saved  
From hate like this: let me but totter back,  
Perhaps I shall elude those jeers which creep  
Into my very brain, and shut these scorched  
Eyelids, and keep those mocking faces out.

Listen, Aprile! I am very calm:

## PARACELSUS

Be not deceived, there is no passion here,  
Where the blood leaps like an imprisoned thing.  
I am calm; I will exterminate the race!  
Enough of that: 'tis said and it shall be.  
And now be merry—safe and sound am I,  
Who broke through their best ranks to get at you;  
And such a havoc, such a route, Aprile!

*Fest.* Have you no thought, no memory for me,  
Aureole? I am so wretched—my pure Michal  
Is gone, and you alone are left to me,  
And even you forget me: take my hand—  
Lean on me, thus. Do you not know me, Aureole?

*Par.* Festus, my own friend, you are come at last?  
As you say, 'tis an awful enterprize—  
But you believe I shall go through with it:  
'Tis like you, and I thank you; thank him for me,  
Dear Michal! See how bright St. Saviour's spire  
Flames in the sunset; all its figures quaint  
Gay in the glancing light: you might conceive them  
A troop of yellow-vested, white-haired Jews,  
Bound for their own land where redemption dawns!

*Fest.* Not that blest time—not our youth's time, dear  
God!

*Par.* Ha—stay! true, I forget—all is done since!  
And he is come to judge me: how he speaks,  
How calm, how well! yes, it is true, all true;  
All quackery; all deceit! myself can laugh  
The first at it, if you desire: but still  
You know the obstacles which taught me tricks  
So foreign to my nature—envy, and hate—  
Blind opposition—brutal prejudice—  
Bald ignorance—what wonder if I sunk  
To humour men the way they most approved?  
My cheats were never palmed on such as you,  
Dear Festus! I will kneel if you require me,  
Impart the meagre knowledge I possess,  
Explain its bounded nature, and avow  
My insufficiency—whate'er you will:  
I give the fight up! let there be an end.  
A privacy, an obscure nook for me.

## PARACELSUS

I want to be forgotten even by God!  
But if that cannot be, dear Festus, lay me,  
When I shall die, within some narrow grave,  
Not by itself—for that would be too proud—  
But where such graves are thickest; let it look  
Nowise distinguished from the hillocks round,  
So that the peasant at his brother's bed  
May tread upon my own and know it not;  
And we shall all be equal at the last,  
Or classed according to "life's natural ranks,  
Fathers, sons, brothers, friends—not rich, nor wise,  
Nor gifted: lay me thus, then say "He lived  
"Too much advanced before his brother men:  
"They kept him still in front; 'twas for their good,  
"But yet a dangerous station. It were strange  
"That he should tell God he had never ranked  
"With men: so, here at least he is a man!"  
*Fest.* That God shall take thee to his breast, dear  
Spirit,

Unto his breast, be sure! and here on earth  
Shall splendour sit upon thy name for ever!  
Sun! all the heaven is glad for thee: what care  
If lower mountains light their snowy phares  
At thine effulgence, yet acknowledge not  
The source of day? Men look up to the sun:  
For after-ages shall retrack thy beams,  
And put aside the crowd of busy ones,  
And worship thee alone—the master-mind,  
The thinker, the explorer, the creator!  
Then, who should sneer at the convulsive throes  
With which thy deeds were born, would scorn as  
well

The winding sheet of subterraneous fire  
Which, pent and writhing, sends no less at last  
Huge islands up amid the simmering sea!  
Behold thy might in me! thou hast infused  
Thy soul in mine; and I am grand as thou,  
Seeing I comprehend thee—I so simple,  
Thou so august! I recognise thee first;  
I saw thee rise, I watched thee early and late,

## PARACELSUS

And though no glance reveal thou dost accept  
My homage—thus no less I proffer it,  
And bid thee enter gloriously thy rest!

*Par.* Festus!

*Fest.* I am for noble Aureole, God!  
I am upon his side, come weal or woe!  
His portion shall be mine! He has done well!  
I would have sinned, had I been strong enough,  
As he has sinned! Reward him or I waive  
Reward! If thou canst find no place for him,  
He shall be king elsewhere, and I will be  
His slave for ever! There are two of us!

*Par.* Dear Festus!

*Fest.* Here, dear Aureole! ever by you!

*Par.* Nay, speak on, or I dream again. Speak on!  
Some story, any thing—only your voice.  
I shall dream else. Speak on! ay, leaning so!

*Fest.* Softly the Mayne river glideth  
Close by where my love abideth;  
Sleep's no softer: it proceeds  
On through lawns, on through meads,  
On and on, whate'er befall,  
Meandering and musical,  
Though the niggard pasture's edge  
Bears not on its shaven ledge  
Aught but weeds and waving grasses  
To view the river as it passes,  
Save here and there a scanty patch  
Of primroses, too faint to catch  
A weary bee . . .

*Par.* More, more; say on!

*Fest.* The river pushes  
Its gentle way through strangling rushes,  
Where the glossy king-fisher  
Flutters when noon-heats are near,  
Glad the shelving banks to shun,  
Red and steaming in the sun,  
Where the shrew-mouse with pale throat  
Burrows, and the speckled stoat,  
Where the quick sand-pipers flit

## PARACELSUS

In and out the marl and grit  
That seems to breed them, brown as they.  
Nought disturbs the river's way,  
Save some lazy stork that springs,  
Trailing it with legs and wings,  
Whom the shy fox from the hill  
Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.

*Par.* My heart! they loose my heart, those simple words;

Its darkness passes, which nought else could touch;  
Like some dark snake that force may not expel,  
Which glideth out to music sweet and low.  
What were you doing when your voice broke through  
A chaos of ugly images? You, indeed!  
Are you alone here?

*Fest.* All alone: you know me?

This cell?

*Par.* An unexceptionable vault—  
Good brick and stone—the bats kept out, the rats  
Kept in—a snug nook: how should I mistake it?

*Fest.* But wherefore am I here?

*Par.* Ah! well remembered:  
Why, for a purpose—for a purpose, Festus!  
'Tis like me: here I trifle while time fleets,  
And this occasion, lost, will ne'er return!  
You are here to be instructed. I will tell  
God's message; but I have so much to say,  
I fear to leave half out: all is confused  
No doubt; but doubtless you will learn in time.  
He would not else have brought you here: no doubt  
I shall see clearer soon.

*Fest.* Tell me but this—  
You are not in despair?

*Par.* I? and for what?

*Fest.* Alas, alas! he knows not, as I feared!

*Par.* What is it you would ask me with that earnest,  
Dear, searching face?

*Fest.* How feel you, Aureole?

*Par.* Well!  
Well: 'tis a strange thing. I am dying, Festus,

## PARACELSUS

And now that fast the storm of life subsides,  
I first perceive how great the whirl has been :  
I was calm then, who am so dizzy now—  
Calm in the thick of the tempest, but no less  
A partner of its motion, and mixed up  
With its career. The hurricane is spent  
And the good boat speeds through the brightening  
weather ;

But is it earth or sea that heaves below?  
For the gulf rolls like a meadow, overstrewn  
With ravaged boughs and remnants of the shore :  
And now some islet, loosened from the land,  
Swims past with all its trees, sailing to ocean ;  
And now the air is full of up-torn canes,  
Light strippings from the fan-trees, tamarisks  
Unrooted, with their birds still clinging to them,  
All high in the wind. Even so my varied life  
Drifts by me. I am young, old, happy, sad,  
Hoping, desponding, acting, taking rest,  
And all at once : that is, those past conditions  
Float back at once on me. If I select  
Some special epoch from the crowd, 'tis but  
To will, and straight the rest dissolve away,  
And only that particular state is present,  
With all its long-forgotten circumstance,  
Distinct and vivid as at first—myself  
A careless looker-on, and nothing more !  
Indifferent and amused, but nothing more !  
And this is death : I understand it all.  
New being waits me ; new perceptions must  
Be born in me before I plunge therein ;  
Which last is Death's affair ; and while I speak,  
Minute by minute he is filling me  
With power ; and while my foot is on the threshold  
Of boundless life—the doors unopened yet,  
All preparations not complete within—  
I turn new knowledge upon old events,  
And the effect is . . . But I must not tell ;  
It is not lawful. Your own turn will come  
One day. Wait, Festus ! You will die like me !

## PARACELSUS

*Fest.* 'Tis of that past life that I burn to hear!

*Par.* You wonder it engages me just now?

In truth, I wonder too. What's life to me?

Where'er I look is fire, where'er I listen

Music, and where I tend bliss overmore.

Yet how can I refrain? 'Tis a refined

Delight to view those chances,—one last view.

I am so near the perils I escape,

That I must play with them and turn them over,

To feel how fully they are past and gone.

Still it is like some further cause exists

For this peculiar mood—some hidden purpose;

Did I not tell you something of it, Festus?

I had it fast, but it has somehow slipt

Away from me; it will return anon.

*Fest.* (Indeed his cheek seems young again, his voice

Complete with its old tones: that little laugh

Concluding every phrase, with up-turned eye,

As though one stooped above his head, to whom

He looked for confirmation and applause,—

Where was it gone so long, being kept so well?

Then, the fore-finger pointing as he speaks,

Like one who traces in an open book

The matter he declares; 'tis many a year

Since I remarked it last: and this in him,

But now a ghastly wreck !)

And can it be,

Dear Aureole, you have then found out at last

That worldly things are utter vanity?

That man is made for weakness, and should wait

In patient ignorance till God appoint . . .

*Par.* Ha, the purpose; the true purpose: that is it!

How could I fail to apprehend! You here,

I thus! But no more trifling; I see all,

I know all: my last mission shall be done

If strength suffice. No trifling! Stay; this posture

Hardly befits one thus about to speak:

I will arise.

*Fest.* Nay, Aureole, are you wild?

You cannot leave your couch.

## PARACELSUS

*Par.* No help; no help;  
Not even your hand. So! there, I stand once more!  
Speak from a couch? I never lectured thus.  
My gown—the scarlet, lined with fur; now put  
The chain about my neck; my signet-ring  
Is still upon my hand, I think—even so;  
Last, my good sword; ha, trusty Azoth, leapest  
Beneath thy master's grasp for the last time?  
This couch shall be my throne: I bid these walls  
Be consecrate; this wretched cell become  
A shrine; for here God speaks to men through me!  
Now, Festus, I am ready to begin.

*Fest.* I am dumb with wonder.

*Par.* Listen, therefore, Festus!  
There will be time enough, but none to spare.  
I must content myself with telling only  
The most important points. You doubtless feel  
That I am happy, Festus; very happy.

*Fest.* 'Tis no delusion which uplifts him thus!  
Then you are pardoned, Aureole, all your sin?

*Par.* Ay, pardoned! yet why pardoned?

*Fest.* 'Tis God's praise  
That man is bound to seek, and you . . .

*Par.* Have lived!  
We have to live alone to set forth well  
God's praise. 'Tis true, I sinned much, as I thought,  
And in effect need mercy, for I strove  
To do that very thing; but, do your best  
Or worst, praise rises, and will rise for ever.  
Pardon from Him, because of praise denied—  
Who calls me to Himself to exalt Himself?  
He might laugh as I laugh!

*Fest.* Then all comes  
To the same thing. 'Tis fruitless for mankind  
To fret themselves with what concerns them not;  
They are no use that way: they should lie down  
Content as God has made them, nor go mad  
In thriveless cares to better what is ill.

*Par.* No, no; mistake me not; let me not work  
More harm than I have done! This is my case:



## PARACELSUS

If I go joyous back to God, yet bring  
No offering, if I render up my soul  
Without the fruits it was ordained to bear,  
If I appear the better to love God  
For sin, as one who has no claim on him,—  
Be not deceived: it may be surely thus  
With me, while higher prizes still await  
The mortal persevering to the end.  
For I too have been something, though too soon  
I left the instincts of that happy time!

*Fest.* What happy time? For God's sake, for man's  
sake,

What time was happy? All I hope to know  
That answer will decide. What happy time?

*Par.* When, but the time I vowed my help to man?

*Fest.* Great God, thy judgments are inscrutable!

*Par.* Yes, it was in me; I was born for it—

I, Paracelsus: it was mine by right.  
Doubtless a searching and impetuous soul  
Might learn from its own motions that some task  
Like this awaited it about the world;  
Might seek somewhere in this blank life of ours  
For fit delights to stay its longings vast;  
And, grappling Nature, so prevail on her  
To fill the creature full she dared to frame  
Hungry for joy; and, bravely tyrannous,  
Grow in demand, still craving more and more,  
And make each joy conceded prove a pledge  
Of other joy to follow—bating nought  
Of its desires, still seizing fresh pretence  
To turn the knowledge and the rapture wrung  
As an extreme, last boon, from Destiny,  
Into occasion for new covetings,  
New strifes, new triumphs:—doubtless a strong soul  
Alone, unaided might attain to this,  
So glorious is our nature, so august  
Man's inborn uninstructed impulses,  
His naked spirit so majestic!  
But this was born in me; I was made so;  
Thus much time saved: the feverish appetites,

## PARACELSUS

The tumult of unproved desires, the unaimed  
Uncertain yearnings, aspirations blind,  
Distrust, mistake, and all that ends in tears  
Were saved me; thus I entered on my course!  
You may be sure I was not all exempt  
From human trouble; just so much of doubt  
As bade me plant a surer foot upon  
The sun-road—kept my eye unruined mid  
The fierce and flashing splendour—set my heart  
Trembling so much as warned me I stood there  
On sufferance—not to idly gaze, but cast  
Light on a darkling race; save for that doubt,  
I stood at first where all aspire at last  
To stand; the secret of the world was mine.  
I knew, I felt, (perception unexpressed,  
Uncomprehended by our narrow thought,  
But somehow felt and known in every shift  
And change in spirit,—nay, in every pore  
Of the body, even,)—what God is, what we are,  
What life is—how God tastes an infinite joy  
In infinite ways—one everlasting bliss,  
From whom all being emanates, all power  
Proceeds; in whom is life for evermore,  
Yet whom existence in its lowest form  
Includes; where dwells enjoyment there is He!  
With still a flying point of bliss remote,  
A happiness in store afar, a sphere  
Of distant glory in full view; thus climbs  
Pleasure its heights for ever and for ever!  
The centre-fire heaves underneath the earth,  
And the earth changes like a human face;  
The molten ore bursts up among the rocks,  
Winds into the stone's heart, outbranches bright  
In hidden mines, spots barren river-beds,  
Crumbles into fine sand where sunbeams bask—  
God joys therein! The wroth sea's waves are edged  
With foam, white as the bitten lip of Hate,  
When in the solitary, waste, strange groups  
Of young volcanos come up, cyclops-like,  
Staring together with their eyes on flame;—

## PARACELSUS

God tastes a pleasure in their uncouth pride!  
Then all is still : earth is a wintry clod ;  
But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress, passes  
Over its breast to waken it ; rare verdure  
Buds tenderly upon rough banks, between  
The withered tree-roots and the cracks of frost,  
Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face ;  
The grass grows bright, the boughs are swoln with  
blossoms,

Like chrysalids impatient for the air ;  
The shining dorrs are busy ; beetles run  
Along the furrows, ants make their ado ;  
Above, birds fly in merry flocks—the lark  
Soars up and up, shivering for very joy ;  
Afar the ocean sleeps ; white fishing-gulls  
Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe  
Of nested limpets ; savage creatures seek  
Their loves in wood and plain ; and God renews  
His ancient rapture ! Thus he dwells in all,  
From life's minute beginnings, up at last  
To man—the consummation of this scheme  
Of being, the completion of this sphere  
Of life : whose attributes had here and there  
Been scattered o'er the visible world before,  
Asking to be combined—dim fragments meant  
To be united in some wondrous whole—  
Imperfect qualities throughout creation,  
Suggesting some one creature yet to make—  
Some point where all those scattered rays should meet  
Convergent in the faculties of man.  
Power ; neither put forth blindly, nor controlled  
Calmly by perfect knowledge ; to be used  
At risk, inspired or checked by hope and fear :  
Knowledge ; not intuition, but the slow  
Uncertain fruit of an enhancing toil,  
Strengthened by love : love ; not serenely pure,  
But strong from weakness, like a chance-sown plant  
Which, cast on stubborn soil, puts forth changed  
buds,

And softer stains, unknown in happier climes ;

## PARACELSUS

Love which endures, and doubts, and is oppressed,  
And cherished, suffering much, and much sustained,  
A blind, oft-failing, yet believing love,  
A half-enlightened, often-chequered trust:—  
Hints and previsions of which faculties,  
Are strewn confusedly everywhere about  
The inferior natures; and all lead up higher,  
All shape out dimly the superior race,  
The heir of hopes too fair to turn out false,  
And Man appears at last: so far the seal  
Is put on life; one stage of being complete,  
One scheme wound up; and from the grand result  
A supplementary reflux of light,  
Illustrates all the inferior grades, explains  
Each back step in the circle. Not alone  
For their possessor dawn those qualities,  
But the new glory mixes with the heaven  
And earth: Man, once descried, 'imprints for ever  
His presence on all lifeless things; the winds  
Are henceforth voices, in a wail or shout,  
A querulous mutter, or a quick gay laugh—  
Never a senseless gust now man is born!  
The herded pines commune, and have deep thoughts,  
A secret they assemble to discuss,  
When the sun drops behind their trunks which glare  
Like grates of hell: the peerless cup afloat  
Of the lake-lily is an urn, some nymph  
Swims bearing high above her head: no bird  
Whistles unseen, but through the gaps above  
That let light in upon the gloomy woods,  
A shape peeps from the breezy forest-top,  
Arch with small puckered mouth and mocking eye:  
The morn has enterprise,—deep quiet droops  
With evening; triumph takes the sun-set hour,  
Voluptuous transport ripens with the corn  
Beneath a warm moon like a happy face:  
—And this to fill us with regard for man,  
With apprehension for his passing worth,  
Desire to work his proper nature out,  
And ascertain his rank and final place;

## PARACELSUS

For these things tend still upward—progress is  
The law of life—man's self is not yet Man!  
Nor shall I deem his object served, his end  
Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,  
While only here and there a star dispels  
The darkness, here and there a towering mind  
O'erlooks its prostrate fellows: when the host  
Is out at once to the despair of night,  
When all mankind alike is perfected,  
Equal in full-blown powers—then, not till then,  
I say, begins man's general infancy!  
For wherefore make account of feverish starts  
Of restless members of a dormant whole—  
Impatient nerves which quiver while the body  
Slumbers as in a grave? O, long ago  
The brow was twitched, the tremulous lids astir,  
The peaceful mouth disturbed; half-uttered speech  
Ruffled the lip, and then the teeth were set,  
The breath drawn sharp, the strong right-hand  
    clenched stronger,  
As it would pluck a lion by the jaw;  
The glorious creature laughed out even in sleep!  
But when full roused, each giant-limb awake,  
Each sinew strung, the great heart pulsing fast,  
He shall start up, and stand on his own earth,  
And so begin his long triumphant march,  
And date his being thence,—thus wholly roused,  
What he achieves shall be set down to him!  
When all the race is perfected alike  
As Man, that is: all tended to mankind,  
And, man produced, all has its end thus far;  
But in completed man begins anew  
A tendency to God. Prognostics told  
Man's near approach; so in man's self arise  
August anticipations, symbols, types  
Of a dim splendour ever on before,  
In that eternal circle run by life:  
For men begin to pass their nature's bound,  
And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant  
Their proper joys and griefs; and outgrow all

## PARACELSUS

The narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade  
Before the unmeasured thirst for good; while peace  
Rises within them ever more and more.  
Such men are even now upon the earth,  
Serene amid the half-formed creatures round,  
Who should be saved by them and joined with them.  
Such was my task, and I was born to it—  
Free, as I said but now, from much that chains  
Spirits, high-dowered, but limited and vexed  
By a divided and delusive aim.  
A shadow mocking a reality  
Whose truth avails not wholly to disperse  
The flitting mimic called up by itself,  
And so remains perplexed and nigh put out  
By its fantastic fellow's wavering gleam.  
I, from the first, was never cheated so;  
I never fashioned out a fancied good  
Distinct from man's; a service to be done,  
A glory to be ministered unto,  
With powers put forth at man's expense, withdrawn  
From labouring in his behalf; a strength  
Denied that might avail him! I cared not  
Lest his success ran counter to success  
Elsewhere: for God is glorified in man,  
And to man's glory, vowed I soul and limb.  
Yet, constituted thus, and thus endowed,  
I failed: I gazed on power till I grew blind—  
On power; I could not take my eyes from that—  
That only, I thought, should be preserved, increased  
At any risk, displayed, struck out at once—  
The sign, and note, and character of man.  
I saw no use in the past: only a scene  
Of degradation, imbecility—  
The record of disgraces best forgotten,  
A sullen page in human chronicles  
Fit to erase: I saw no cause why man  
Should not be all-sufficient even now;  
Or why his annals should be forced to tell  
That once the tide of light, about to break  
Upon the world, was sealed within its spring;

## PARACELSUS

I would have had one day, one moment's space,  
Change man's condition, push each slumbering claim  
To mastery o'er the elemental world  
At once to full maturity, then roll  
Oblivion o'er the tools, and hide from man,  
What night had ushered morn. Not so, dear child  
Of after-days, wilt thou reject the Past,  
Big with deep warnings of the proper tenure  
By which thou hast the earth: the Present for thee  
Shall have distinct and trembling beauty, seen  
Beside that Past's own shade, whence, in relief,  
Its brightness shall stand out: nor on thee yet  
Shall burst the Future, as successive zones  
Of several wonder open on some spirit  
Flying secure and glad from heaven to heaven;  
But thou shalt painfully attain to joy,  
While hope, and fear, and love, shall keep thee man!  
All this was hid from me: as one by one  
My dreams grew dim, my wide aims circumscribed,  
As actual good within my reach decreased,  
While obstacles sprung up this way and that,  
To keep me from effecting half the sum,  
Small as it proved; as objects, mean within  
The primal aggregate, seemed, even the least,  
Itself a match for my concentrated strength—  
What wonder if I saw no way to shun  
Despair? The power I sought for man, seemed God's!  
In this conjuncture, as I prayed to die,  
A strange adventure made me know, One Sin  
Had spotted my career from its uprise;  
I saw Aprile—my Aprile there!  
And as the poor melodious wretch disburthened  
His heart, and moaned his weakness in my ear,  
I learned my own deep error; love's undoing  
Taught me the worth of love in man's estate,  
And what proportion love should hold with power  
In his right constitution; love preceding  
Power, and with much power, always much more love;  
Love still too straitened in its present means,  
And earnest for new power to set it free.

## PARACELSUS

I learned this, and supposed the whole was learned :  
And thus, when men received with stupid wonder  
My first revealings, would have worshipped me,  
And I despised and loathed their proffered praise—  
When, with awakened eyes, they took revenge  
For past credulity in casting shame  
On my real knowledge, and I hated them—  
It was not strange I saw no good in man,  
To overbalance all the wear and waste  
Of faculties, displayed in vain, but born  
To prosper in some better sphere: and why?  
In my own heart love had not been made wise  
To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind,  
To know even hate is but a mask of love's,  
To see a good in evil, and a hope  
In ill-success; to sympathize, be proud  
Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim  
Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,  
Their prejudice, and fears, and cares, and doubts;  
Which all touch upon nobleness, despite  
Their error, all tend upwardly though weak,  
Like plants in mines which never saw the sun,  
But dream of him, and guess where he may be,  
And do their best to climb and get to him.  
All this I knew not, and I failed. Let men  
Regard me, and the poet dead long ago  
Who once loved rashly; and shape forth a third,  
And better tempered spirit, warned by both:  
As from the over-radiant star too mad  
To drink the light-springs, beamless thence itself—  
And the dark orb which borders the abyss,  
Ingulfed in icy night,—might have its course  
A temperate and equidistant world.  
Meanwhile, I have done well, though not all well.  
As yet men cannot do without contempt—  
'Tis for their good, and therefore fit awhile  
That they reject the weak, and scorn the false,  
Rather than praise the strong and true, in me.  
But after, they will know me! If I stoop  
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,



## PARACELSUS

It is but for a time; I press God's lamp  
Close to my breast—its splendour, soon or late,  
Will pierce the gloom: I shall emerge one day!  
You understand me? I have said enough?

*Fest.* Now die, dear Aureole!

*Par.* Festus, let my hand—  
This hand, lie in your own—my own true friend!  
Aprile! Hand in hand with you, Aprile!

*Fest.* And this was Paracelsus!



**STRAFFORD :**  
**AN HISTORICAL TRAGEDY**

DEDICATED,  
IN ALL AFFECTIONATE ADMIRATION,  
TO  
WILLIAM C. MACREADY, ESQ.  
BY  
HIS MOST GRATEFUL AND  
DEVOTED FRIEND,  
R. B.

*April 23, 1837.*

## PREFACE

I HAD for some time been engaged in a Poem of a very different nature, when induced to make the present attempt; and am not without apprehension that my eagerness to freshen a jaded mind by diverting it to the healthy natures of a grand epoch, may have operated unfavourably on the represented play, which is one of Action in Character rather than Character in Action. To remedy this, in some degree, considerable curtailment will be necessary, and, in a few instances, the supplying details not required, I suppose, by the mere reader. While a trifling success would much gratify, failure will not wholly discourage me from another effort: experience is to come, and earnest endeavour may yet remove many disadvantages.

The portraits are, I think, faithful; and I am exceedingly fortunate in being able, in proof of this, to refer to the subtle and eloquent exposition of the characters of Eliot and Strafford, in the Lives of Eminent British Statesmen now in the course of publication in Lardner's Cyclopædia, by a writer whom I am proud to call my friend; and whose biographies of Hampden, Pym, and Vane, will, I am sure, fitly illustrate the present year—the Second Centenary of the Trial concerning Ship-Money. My Carlisle, however, is purely imaginary: I at first sketched her singular likeness roughly in, as suggested by Matthew and the memoir-writers—but it was too artificial, and the substituted outline is exclusively from Voiture and Waller.

The Italian boat-song in the last scene is from Redi's *Bacco*, long since naturalized in the joyous and delicate version of Leigh Hunt.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

(*Theatre-Royal Covent Garden, May 1, 1837*)

CHARLES THE FIRST	...	...	Mr. DALE.
Earl of HOLLAND	...	...	HUCKEL.
Lord SAVILE	...	...	TILBURY.
Sir HENRY VANE	...	...	THOMPSON.
WENTWORTH, Viscount WENT- WORTH, Earl of STRAFFORD			MACREADY.
JOHN PYM	...	...	VANDENHOFF.
JOHN HAMPDEN	...	...	HARRIS.
The younger VANE	...	...	J. WEBSTER.
DENZIL HOLLIS	...	...	G. BENNET.
BENJAMIN RUDYARD	...	...	PRITCHARD.
NATHANIEL FIENNES	...	...	WORREL.
Earl of LOUDON	...	...	BENDER.
MAXWELL, <i>Usher of the Black Rod</i>			RANSFORD.
BALFOUR, <i>Constable of the Tower</i>			COLLETT.
A Puritan	...	...	WEBSTER.
Queen HENRIETTA	...	...	Miss VINCENT.
LUCY PERCY, Countess of CAR- LISLE	...	...	HELEN FAUCIT.

*Presbyterians, Scots Commissioners, Adherents of Strafford, Secretaries, Officers of the Court, etc. Two of Strafford's Children.*

# STRAFFORD

## ACT I

### SCENE I. *A House near Whitehall*

HAMPDEN, HOLLIS, *the younger VANE, RUDYARD, FIENNES, and many of the Presbyterian Party, LOUDON and other Scots Commissioners: some seated, some standing beside a table strewn over with papers, etc.*

*Vane.* I say, if he be here . . .

*Rud.* . . . And he is here!

*Hol.* For England's sake let every man be still  
Nor speak of him, so much as say his name,  
Till Pym rejoin us! Rudyard—Vane—remember  
One rash conclusion may decide our course  
And with it England's fate—think—England's fate!  
Hampden, for England's sake they should be still!

*Vane.* You say so, Hollis? well, I must be still!  
It is indeed too bitter that one man—  
Any one man . . .

*Rud.* . . . You are his brother, Hollis!

*Hamp.* Shame on you, Rudyard! time to tell him  
that,

When he forgets the Mother of us all.

*Rud.* Do I forget her? . . .

*Hamp.* . . . —You talk idle hate  
Against her foe: is that so strange a thing?  
Is hating Wentworth all the help she needs?

*A Puritan.* The Philistine strode, cursing as he went:  
But David—five smooth pebbles from the brook  
Within his scrip . . .

## STRAFFORD

*Rud.* —Be you as still as David!

*Fien.* Here's Rudyard not ashamed to wag a tongue  
Stiff with ten years disuse of Parliaments;  
Why, when the last sate, Wentworth sate with us!

*Rud.* Let's hope for news of them now he returns:  
—But I'll abide Pym's coming.

*Vane.* Now by Heaven  
They may be cool that can, silent that can,  
Some have a gift that way: Wentworth is here—  
Here—and the King's safe closeted with him  
Ere this! and when I think on all that's past  
Since that man left us—how his single arm  
Roll'd back the good of England, roll'd it back  
And set the woeful Past up in its place . . .

*A Puritan.* Exalting Dagon where the Ark should  
be!

*Vane.* . . . How that man has made firm the fickle  
King

—Hampden, I will speak out—in aught he feared  
To venture on before; taught Tyranny  
Her dismal trade, the use of all her tools,  
To ply the scourge yet screw the gag so close  
That strangled agony bleeds mute to death:  
—How he turns Ireland to a private stage  
For training infant villanies, new ways  
Of wringing treasure out of tears and gore,  
Unheard oppressions nourished in the dark  
To try how much Man's nature can endure  
—If he dies under it, what harm? if not . . .

*Fien.* Why, one more trick is added to the rest  
Worth a King's knowing—

*Rud.* —And what Ireland bears  
England may learn to bear.

*Vane.* . . . How all this while  
That man has set himself to one dear task,  
The bringing Charles to relish more and more  
Power . . .

*Rud.* Power without law . . .

*Fien.* Power and blood too . . .

*Vane.* . . . Can I be still?



## STRAFFORD

*Hamp.* For that you should be still.

*Vane.* Oh, Hampden, then and now! The year he left us

The People by its Parliament could wrest  
The Bill of Rights from the reluctant King:  
And now,—he'll find in an obscure small room  
A stealthy gathering of great-hearted men  
That take up England's cause: England is—here!

*Hamp.* And who despairs of England?

*Rud.* That do I

If Wentworth is to rule her. I am sick  
To think her wretched masters, Hamilton,  
The muckworm Cottington, the maniac Laud,  
May yet be longed for back again. I say  
I do despair.

*Vane.* And, Rudyard, I'll say this—

And, (*turning to the rest*) all true men say after me!  
not loud—

But solemnly, and as you'd say a prayer:  
This Charles, who treads our England under foot,  
Has just so much—it may be fear or craft—  
As bids him pause at each fresh outrage; friends,  
He needs some sterner hand to grasp his own,  
Some voice to ask, "Why shrink?—am I not by?"  
—A man that England loved for serving her,  
Found in his heart to say, "I know where best  
The iron heel shall bruise her, for she leans  
Upon me when you trample." Witness, you!  
But inasmuch as life is hard to take  
From England . . .

*Many Voices.* Go on, Vane! 'Tis well said, Vane!

*Vane.* . . . Who has not so forgotten Runnymede. . . .

*Voices.* 'Tis well and bravely spoken, Vane! Go on!

*Vane.* . . . There are some little signs of late she  
knows

The ground no place for her! no place for her!  
When the King beckons—and beside him stands  
The same bad man once more, with the same smile,  
And the same savage gesture! Now let England  
Make proof of us.

## STRAFFORD

*Voices.* Strike him—the Renegade—  
Haman—Ahithophel—

*Hamp. (To the Scots.)* Gentlemen of the North,  
It was not thus the night your claims were urged,  
And we pronounced the League and Covenant  
Of Scotland to be England's cause as well!  
Vane, there, sate motionless the whole night through.

*Vane.* Hampden . . .

*Fien.* Stay Vane!

*Lou.* Be patient, gallant Vane!

*Vane.* Mind how you counsel patience, Loudon! you  
Have still a Parliament, and a brave League  
To back it; you are free in Scotland still—  
While we are brothers (as these hands are knit  
So let our hearts be!)—hope's for England yet!  
But know you why this Wentworth comes? to quench  
This faintest hope? that he brings war with him?  
Know you this Wentworth? What he dares?

*Lou.* Dear Vane,  
We know—'tis nothing new . . .

*Vane.* And what's new, then,  
In calling for his life? Why Pym himself . . .  
You must have heard—ere Wentworth left our cause  
He would see Pym first; there were many more  
Strong on the People's side and friends of his,—  
Eliot that's dead, Rudyard and Hampden here,  
But Wentworth cared not for them; only, Pym  
He would see—Pym and he were sworn, they say,  
To live and die together—so they met  
At Greenwich: Wentworth, you are sure, was long,  
Specious enough, the devil's argument  
Lost nothing in his lips; he'd have Pym own  
A Patriot could not do a purer thing  
Than follow in his track; they two combined  
Could put down England. Well, Pym heard him out—  
One glance—you know Pym's eye—one word was all:  
“You leave us, Wentworth: while your head is on  
“I'll not leave you.”

*Hamp.* Has Pym left Wentworth, then?  
Has England lost him? Will you let him speak,

## STRAFFORD

Or put your crude surmises in his mouth?

Away with this! (*To the rest.*) Will you have Pym or Vane?

*Voices.* Wait Pym's arrival! Pym shall speak!

*Hamp.* Meanwhile

Let Loudon read the Parliament's report  
From Edinburgh: our last hope, as Vane says,  
Is in the stand it makes. Loudon!

*Vane.* (*As LOUDON is about to read*)—No—no—  
Silent I can be: not indifferent!

*Hamp.* Then each keep silence, praying God a space  
That he will not cast England quite away  
In this her visitation! (*All assume a posture of  
reverence.*)

*A Puritan.* Seven years long  
The Midianite drove Israel into dens  
And caves.

Till God sent forth a mighty man,  
(*PYM enters.*)

Even Gideon! (*All start up.*)

*Pym.* Wentworth's come: he has not reached  
Whitehall: they've hurried up a Council there  
To lose no time and find him work enough.  
Where's Loudon? Your Scots' Parliament . . .

*Lou.* Is firm:  
We were about to read reports . . .

*Pym.* The King  
Has just dissolved your Parliament.

*Lou. and other of the Scots.* Great God!  
An oath-breaker! Stand by us England then!

*Pym.* The King's too sanguine; doubtless Went-  
worth's here;  
But still some little form might be kept up.

*Hol.* Now speak, Vane! Rudyard, you had much  
to say!

*Hamp.* The rumour's false, then . . .

*Pym.* Ay, the Court gives out  
His own concerns have brought him back: I know  
'Tis Charles recalls him: he's to supersede  
The tribe of Cottingtons and Hamiltons

## STRAFFORD

Whose part is played: there's talk enough, by this,—  
 Merciful talk, the King thinks: time is now  
 To turn the record's last and bloody leaf  
 That, chronicling a Nation's great despair,  
 Tells they were long rebellious, and their Lord  
 Indulgent, till, all kind expedients tried,  
 He drew the sword on them, and reigned in peace.  
 Laud's laying his religion on the Scots  
 Was the last gentle entry:—the new page  
 Shall run, the King thinks, "Wentworth thrust it down  
 At the sword's point."

*A Puritan.* I'll do your bidding, Pym,—  
 England's and your's . . . one blow!

*Pym.* A glorious thing—  
 We all say, friends, it is a glorious thing  
 To right that England! Heaven grows dark above,—  
 Let's snatch one moment ere the thunder fall  
 To say how well the English spirit comes out  
 Beneath it! all have done their best, indeed,  
 From lion Eliot, that grand Englishman,  
 To the least here: and who, the least one here,  
 When She is saved (and her redemption dawns  
 Dimly, most dimly, but it dawns—it dawns)—  
 Who'd give at any price his hope away  
 Of being named along with the Great Men?  
 One would not . . . no, one would not give that up!

*Hamp.* And one name shall be dearer than all  
 names:

When children, yet unborn, are taught that name  
 After their fathers',—taught one matchless man . . .

*Pym.* . . . Saved England?

What if Wentworth's should be still  
 That name?

*Rud. and others.* We have just said it, Pym! His  
 death Saves her!

*Fien.* We said that! There's no way beside!

*A Puritan.* I'll do your bidding, Pym! They struck  
 down Joab . . .

And purged the land.

*Vane.* No villanous striking-down!

## STRAFFORD

*Rud.* No—a calm vengeance: let the whole land rise  
And shout for it. No Feltons!

*Pym.* *Rudyard, no.*  
England rejects all Feltons; most of all  
Since Wentworth . . .

Hampden, say the praise again.  
That England will award me . . . But I'll think  
You know me, all of you. Then, I believe,  
—Spite of the past,—Wentworth rejoins you, friends!

*Rud. and others.* Wentworth! apostate . . .  
*Vane.* Wentworth, double-dyed  
A traitor! Is it Pym, indeed . . .

*Pym.* . . . Who says  
Vane never knew that Wentworth—loved that Went-  
worth—

Felt glad to stroll with him, arm lock'd in arm,  
Along the streets to see the People pass  
And read in every island-countenance  
Fresh argument for God against the King,—  
Never sate down . . . say, in the very house  
Where Eliot's brow grew broad with noble thoughts  
(You've joined us, Hampden, Hollis, you as well,)  
And then left talking over Gracchus' death . . .

*Vane.* . . . To frame, we know it Pym, the choicest  
clause  
In the Petition of Rights: which Wentworth framed  
A month before he took at the King's hand  
His Northern Presidency, which that Bill  
Denounced . . .

*Rud.* And infamy along with it!  
*A Puritan.* For whoso putteth his right-hand to  
the plough  
And turneth back . . .

*Pym.* Never more, never more  
Walked we together! Most alone I went;  
I have had friends—all here are fast my friends—  
But I shall never quite forget that friend!  
(After a pause) And yet it could not but be real in him!  
You Vane, you Rudyard, have no right to trust  
That Wentworth . . . O will no one hope with me?

## STRAFFORD

—Vane—think you Wentworth will shed English blood  
Like water?

*A Puritan.* Ireland is Aceldama!

*Pym.* Will he turn Scotland to a hunting ground  
To please the King, now that he knows the King?  
The People or the King? The People, Hampden,  
Or the King . . . and that King—Charles! Will no  
one hope?

*Hamp.* Pym, we do know you: you'll not set your  
heart

On any baseless thing: but say one deed  
Of Wentworth's, since he left us . . . (*Shouting without.*)

*Vane.* . . . Pym, he comes  
And they shout for him!—Wentworth!—he's with  
Charles—

The king embracing him—now—as we speak . . .  
And he, to be his match in courtesies,  
Taking the whole war's risk upon himself!—  
Now—while you tell us here how changed he is—  
Do you hear, Pym? The People shout for him!

*Fien.* We'll not go back, now! Hollis has no brother—  
Vane has no father . . .

*Vane.* . . . Pym should have no friend!  
Stand you firm, Pym! Eliot's gone, Wentworth's lost,  
We have but you, and stand you very firm!  
Truth is eternal, come below what will,  
But . . . I know not . . . if you should fail . . .  
O God! O God!

*Pym.* (*apart and in thought*). And yet if 'tis a dream,  
no more,  
That Wentworth chose their side, and brought the  
King

To love it as though Laud had loved it first,  
And the Queen after—that he led their cause  
Calm to success and kept it spotless through,  
So that our very eyes could look upon  
The travail of our soul, and close content  
That violence, which something mars even Right  
That sanctions it, had taken off no grace.  
From its serene regard. Only a dream!

# STRAFFORD

*Hamp.* Proceed to England's work: who reads the list?

*A Voice.* "Ship-money is refused or fiercely paid  
In every county, save the northern ones  
Where Wentworth's influence" . . . (*Renewed shouting.*)

Vane. (*passionately striking the table*). I, in England's

STUDY 1

Declare her work, this way, at end ! till now--

Up to this moment—peaceful strife was well!

We English had free leave to think: till now,

We had a shadow of a Parliament:

'Twas well: but all is changed: they threaten us:

They'll try brute-force for law—here—in our land!

*Many Voices.* True hearts with Vane! The old true  
hearts with Vane!

Vane. Till we crush Wentworth for her, there's no  
act

**Serves England !**

*Voices.* Vane for England!

*Pym (as he passes slowly before them).* Pym should be  
Something to England ! I seek Wentworth, friends !

SCENE II.—*Whitehall.*

*Enter* CARLISLE and WENTWORTH.

*Went.* And the King?

*Car.* Dear Wentworth, lean on me; sit then;  
I'll tell you all; this horrible fatigue  
Will kill you.

*Went.* No; or—Lucy, just your arm;  
I'll not sit till I've cleared this up with him:  
After that, rest. The King?

*Car.* Confides in you.

*Went.* Why? why now?

—They have kind throats, the people!

Shout for me . . . they!—poor fellows.

Car. Did they shout?

## STRAFFORD

—We took all measures to keep off the crowd—  
Did they shout for you?

*Went.* Wherefore should they not?  
Does the King take such measures for himself?  
Beside, there's such a dearth of malcontents,  
You say?

*Car.* I said but few dared carp at you . . .

*Went.* At me? at us, Carlisle! The King and I!  
He's surely not disposed to let me bear  
Away the fame from him of these late deeds  
In Ireland? I am yet his instrument  
Be it for well or ill?

He trusts me then?

*Car.* The King, dear Wentworth, purposes, I know  
To grant you, in the face of all the Court . . .

*Went.* All the Court! Evermore the Court about us!  
Savile and Holland, Hamilton and Vane  
About us,—then the King will grant me . . . Lady,  
Will the King leave these—leave all these—and say  
“Tell me your whole mind, Wentworth!”

*Car.* But you said  
You would be calm.

*Went.* Lucy, and I am calm!  
How else shall I do all I come to do,  
—Broken, as you may see, body and mind—  
How shall I serve the King? time wastes meanwhile,  
You have not told me half . . . His footstep! No.  
—But now, before I meet him,—(I am calm)—  
Why does the King distrust me?

*Car.* He does not  
Distrust you.

*Went.* Lucy, you can help me . . . you  
Have even seemed to care for me: help me!  
Is it the Queen?

*Car.* No—not the Queen—the party  
That poisons the Queen's ear,—Savile—and Holland . . .

*Went.* I know—I know—and Vane, too, he's one too?  
Go on—and he's made Secretary—Well?  
—Or leave them out and go straight to the charge!  
The charge!



## STRAFFORD

*Car.* O there's no charge—no precise charge—  
Only they sneer, make light of . . . one may say  
Nibble at what you do.

*Went.* I know: but Lucy,  
Go on, dear Lucy—Oh I need you so!  
I reckoned on you from the first!—Go on!  
. . . Was sure could I once see this gentle girl  
When I arrived, she'd throw an hour away  
To help her weary friend. . . .

*Car.* You thought of me,  
Dear Wentworth?

*Went.* . . . But go on! The People here . . .

*Car.* They do not think your Irish Government  
Of that surpassing value . . .

*Went.* The one thing  
Of value! The one service that the crown  
May count on! All that keeps these very things  
In power, to vex me . . . not that they do vex me,  
Only it might vex some to hear that service  
Decried—the sole support that's left the King!

*Car.* So the Archbishop says.

*Went.* Ah? well, perhaps  
The only hand held up in its defence  
May be old Laud's!

These Hollands, then, these Saviles  
Nibble? They nibble?—that's the very word!

*Car.* Your profit in the Customs, Bristol says, . . .

*Went.* Enough! 'tis too unworthy,—I am not  
So patient as I thought!

What's Pym about?

*Car.* Pym?

*Went.* Pym and the People.

*Car.* Oh, the Faction!  
Extinct—of no account—there'll never be  
Another Parliament.

*Went.* Tell Savile that!  
You may know—(ay, you do—the creatures here  
Never forget!) that in my earliest life  
I was not . . . not what I am now! The King  
May take my word on points concerning Pym

## STRAFFORD

Before Lord Savile's, Lucy, or if not,  
Girl, they shall ruin their vile selves, not me,  
These Vanes and Hollands—I'll not be their tool—  
Pym would receive me yet!

—But then the King!—  
I'll bear it all. The King—where is he, Girl?

*Car.* He is apprised that you are here: be calm!

*Went.* And why not meet me now? Ere now?  
You said

He sent for me . . . he longed for me!

*Car.* . . . Because . . .

He is now . . . I think a Council's sitting now  
About this Scots affair . . .

*Went.* . . . A Council sits?

They have not taken a decided course  
Without me in this matter?

*Car.* . . . I should say . . .

*Went.* The War? They cannot have agreed to  
that?

Not the Scots' War?—without consulting me—  
Me—that am here to show how rash it is,  
How easy to dispense with?

—Ah, you too

Against me! well,—the King may find me here.

(*As CARLISLE is going.*)—Forget it, Lucy: cares make  
peevish: mine

Weigh me (but 'tis a secret) to my grave.

*Car.* For life or death I am your own, dear friend!

(*Aside.*) I could not tell him . . . sick too! . . . And  
the King

Shall love him! Wentworth here, who can withstand  
His look?—And he did really think of me?

O 'twas well done to spare him all the pain! (*Exit.*)

*Went.* Heartless! . . . but all are heartless here.

Go now,

Forsake the people!

—I did not forsake

The People: they shall know it . . . when the King  
Will trust me!—who trusts all beside at once  
While I . . . have not spoke Vane and Savile fair,

## STRAFFORD

And am not trusted : have but saved the Throne :  
Have not picked up the Queen's glove prettily,  
And am not trusted !

But he'll see me now :

And Weston's dead—and the Queen's English now—  
More English—oh, one earnest word will brush  
These reptiles from . . . (*footsteps within.*)

The step I know so well !

'Tis Charles !—But now—to tell him . . . no—to ask  
him

What's in me to distrust :—or, best begin  
By proving that this frightful Scots affair  
Is just what I foretold : I'll say, "my liege" . . .  
And I feel sick, now ! and the time is come—  
And one false step no way to be repaired . . .  
You were revenged, Pym, could you look on me !

(*PYM enters.*)

*Went.* I little thought of you just then.

*Pym.* No ? I

Think always of you, Wentworth.

*Went. (Aside.)* The old voice !

I wait the King, sir.

*Pym.* True—you look so pale :

A council sits within ; when that breaks up

He'll see you.

*Went.* Sir, I thank you.

*Pym.* Oh, thank Laud !

You know when Laud once gets on Church affairs

The case is desperate : he'll not be long

To-day : He only means to prove, to-day,

We English all are mad to have a hand

In butchering the Scots for serving God

After their fathers' fashion : only that.

*Went.* Sir, keep your jests for those who relish  
them !

(*Aside.*) Does *he* enjoy their confidence ? (*To P.*) 'Tis  
kind

To tell me what the Council does.

## STRAFFORD

*Pym.* You grudge  
That I should know it had resolved on war  
Before you came? no need—you shall have all  
The credit, trust me.

*Went.* Have they, Pym . . . not dared—  
They have not dared . . . that is—I know you not—  
Farewell—the times are changed.

*Pym.* —Since we two met  
At Greenwich? Yes—poor patriots though we be,  
You shall see something here, some slight return  
For your exploits in Ireland! Changed indeed,  
Could our friend Eliot look from out his grave!  
Ah, Wentworth, one thing for acquaintance-sake;  
Just to decide a question; have you, now,  
Really felt well since you forsook us?

*Went.* Pym—  
You're insolent!

*Pym.* Oh, you misapprehend!  
Don't think I mean the advantage is with me:  
I was about to say that, for my part,  
I've never quite held up my head since then,—  
Been quite myself since then: for first, you see,  
I lost all credit after that event  
With those who recollect how sure I was  
Wentworth would outdo Eliot on our side.

*Went.* By Heaven . . .

*Pym.* Forgive me: Savile, Vane, and Holland  
Eschew plain-speaking: 'tis a trick I have.

*Went.* How, when, where,—Savile, Vane and Holland  
speak,—  
Plainly or otherwise,—would have my scorn,  
My perfect scorn, Sir . . .

*Pym.* . . . Did not my poor thoughts  
Claim somewhat?

*Went.* Keep your thoughts! believe the King  
Mistrusts me for their speaking, all these Vanes  
And Saviles! make your mind up, all of you,  
That I am discontented with the King!

*Pym.* Why, you may be—I should be, that I know,  
Were I like you.

## STRAFFORD

*Went.* . . . Like me?

*Pym.* I care not much  
For titles; our friend Eliot died no Lord,  
Hampden's no Lord, and Savile is a Lord:  
But you care, since you sold your soul for one.  
I can't think, therefore, Charles did well to laugh  
When you twice prayed so humbly for an Earldom.

*Went.* Pym . . .

*Pym.* And your letters were the movingest!  
Console yourself: I've borne him prayers just now  
From Scotland not to be opprest by Laud—  
And moving in their way: he'll pay, be sure,  
As much attention as to those you sent.

*Went.* False! a lie, Sir!

. . . Who told you, Pym?

—But then

The King did very well . . . nay, I was glad  
When it was shewn me why;—I first refused it!  
. . . Pym, you were once my friend—don't speak to  
me!

*Pym.* Oh, Wentworth, ancient brother of my soul,  
That all should come to this!

*Went.*

Leave me!

*Pym.* My friend,  
Why should I leave you?

*Went.*

To tell Rudyard this,

And Hampden this! . . .

*Pym.* Whose faces once were bright  
At my approach . . . now sad with doubt and fear,  
Because I hope in you—Wentworth—in you  
Who never mean to ruin England—you  
Who shake, with God's great help, this frightful  
dream

Away, now, in this Palace, where it crept  
Upon you first, and are yourself—your good  
And noble self—our Leader—our dear Chief—  
Hampden's own friend—

This is the proudest day!

Come Wentworth! Do not even see the King!  
The rough old room will seem itself again!

## STRAFFORD

We'll both go in together—you've not seen  
Hampden so long—come—and there's Vane—I know  
You'll love young Vane! This is the proudest day!  
(*The KING enters. WENTWORTH lets fall PYM's hand.*)

*Cha.* Arrived, my Lord?—This Gentleman, we know,  
Was your old friend:

(*To PYM.*) The Scots shall be informed  
What we determine for their happiness. (*Exit PYM.*)  
You have made haste, my Lord.

*Went.* Sire . . . I am come . . .

*Cha.* To aid us with your counsel: this Scots'  
League

And Covenant spreads too far, and we have proofs  
That they intrigue with France: the Faction, too . . .

*Went.* (*Kneels.*) Sire, trust me! but for this once,  
trust me, Sire!

*Cha.* What can you mean?

*Went.* That you should trust me! now!  
Oh—not for my sake! but 'tis sad, so sad  
That for distrusting me, you suffer—you  
Whom I would die to serve: Sire, do you think  
That I would die to serve you?

*Cha.* But rise, Wentworth!

*Went.* What shall convince you? What does  
Savile do

To . . . Ah, one can't tear out one's heart—one's  
heart—

And show it, how sincere a thing it is!

*Cha.* Have not I trusted you?

*Went.* Say aught but that!  
It is my comfort, mark you: all will be  
So different when you trust me . . . as you shall!  
It has not been your fault,—I was away,  
Maligned—away—and how were you to know?  
I am here, now—you mean to trust me, now—  
All will go on so well!

*Cha.* Be sure I will—

I've heard that I should trust you: as you came  
Even Carlisle was telling me . . .

*Went.* No,—hear nothing—

## STRAFFORD

Be told nothing about me ! you're not told  
Your right-hand serves you, or your children love  
you !

*Cha.* You love me . . . only rise !

*Went.* . . . I can speak now.  
I have no right to hide the truth. 'Tis I  
Can save you ; only I. Sire, what is done !

*Cha.* Since Laud's assured . . . the minutes are  
within . . .

Loath as I am to spill my subjects' blood . . .

*Went.* That is, he'll have a war : what's done is  
done !

*Cha.* They have intrigued with France ; that's clear  
to Laud.

*Went.* Has Laud suggested any way to meet  
The war's expence ?

*Cha.* . . . He'd not decide on that  
Until you joined us.

*Went.* . . . Most considerate !  
You're certain they intrigue with France, these  
Scots ?

(*Aside.*) The People would be with us !

*Cha.* . . . Very sure.

*Went.* (The People for us . . . were the People for  
us !)

Sire, a great thought comes to reward your trust !  
Summon a parliament ! in Ireland first,  
And then in England.

*Cha.* . . . Madness !

*Went.* (*Aside.*) . . . That puts off  
The war—gives time to learn their grievances—  
To talk with Pym—(*To CHARLES*). I know the faction.  
as

They style it, . . .

*Cha.* . . . Tutors Scotland !

*Went.* . . . All their plans  
Suppose no parliament : in calling one  
You take them by surprise. Produce the proofs  
Of Scotland's treason ; bid them help you, then !  
Even Pym will not refuse !

## STRAFFORD

*Cha.* . . . . . You would begin  
With Ireland?

*Went.* Take no care for that: that's sure  
To prosper.

*Cha.* You shall rule me: you were best  
Return at once: but take this ere you go! (*Giving a  
paper.*)

Now, do I trust you? You're an Earl: my Friend  
Of Friends: yes, Strafford, while . . . You hear me  
not!

*Went.* Say it all o'er again—but once again—  
The first was for the music—once again!

*Cha.* Strafford, my brave friend, there were wild  
reports—

Vain rumours . . . Henceforth touching Strafford is  
To touch the apple of my sight: why gaze  
So earnestly?

*Went.* I am grown young again,  
And foolish! . . . what was it we spoke of?

*Cha.* . . . . . Ireland,  
The Parliament,—

*Went.* I may go when I will?  
—Now?

*Cha.* Are you tired so soon of me?

*Went.* . . . . . My King . .  
But you will not so very much dislike

A Parliament? I'd serve you any way!

*Cha.* You said just now this was the only way.

*Went.* Sire, I will serve you!

*Cha.* . . . . . Strafford, spare yourself—  
You are so sick, they tell me, . . .

*Went.* . . . . . 'Tis my soul  
That's well and happy, now!

. . . . . This Parliament—  
We'll summon it, the English one—I'll care  
For every thing: You shall not need them much!

*Cha.* If they prove restive . . .

*Went.* . . . . . I shall be with you!

*Cha.* Ere they assemble?

*Went.* . . . . . I will come, or else



## STRAFFORD

Deposit this infirm humanity  
I' the dust! My whole heart stays with you, my  
King!

*(As STRAFFORD goes out, the QUEEN enters.)*

*Cha.* That man must love me!

*Queen.* Is it over then?

Why he looks yellower than ever! well,  
At least we shall not hear eternally  
Of his vast services: he's paid at last.

*Cha.* Not done with: he engages to surpass  
All yet performed in Ireland.

*Queen.* I had thought  
Nothing beyond was ever to be done.  
The War, Charles—will he raise supplies enough?

*Cha.* We've hit on an expedient; he . . . that is  
I have advised . . . we have decided on  
The calling—in Ireland—of a Parliament.

*Queen.* O truly! You agree to that? Is this  
The first fruit of his counsel? But I guessed  
As much.

*Cha.* This is too idle, Henrietta!  
I should know best: He will strain every nerve,  
And once a precedent established . . .

*Queen.* Notice  
How sure he is of a long term of favours!  
He'll see the next, and the next after that;  
No end to Parliaments!

*Cha.* Well, it is done:  
He talks it smoothly, doubtless: if, indeed,  
The Commons here . . .

*Queen.* Here! you will summon them  
Here? Would I were in France again to see  
A King!

*Cha.* But Henrietta . . .

*Queen.* O the Scots  
Do well to spurn your rule!

*Cha.* But, listen, Sweet . . .

*Queen.* Let Strafford listen—you confide in him!

*Cha.* I do not, Love—I do not so confide . . .  
The Parliament shall never trouble us

## STRAFFORD

. . . Nay, hear me! I have schemes—such schemes—  
we'll buy

The leaders off: without that, Strafford's counsel  
Had ne'er prevailed on me. Perhaps I call it  
To have excuse for breaking it—for ever—  
And whose will then the blame be? See you not?  
Come, Dearest!—look! the little fairy, now,  
That cannot reach my shoulder! Dearest, come!

*Exeunt.*)

### END OF THE FIRST ACT

## ACT II

### SCENE I.—(As in Act I. Scene I.)

*The same Party enters confusedly; among the first, the  
younger VANE and RUDYARD*

*Rud.* Twelve subsidies!

*Vane.* O Rudyard, do not laugh  
At least!

*Rud.* True: Strafford called the Parliament—  
'Tis he should laugh!

*A Puritan (entering).*—Out of the serpent's root  
Comes forth a cockatrice.

*Fien. (entering).* —A stinging one,  
If that's the Parliament: twelve subsidies!

A stinging one! but, brother, where's your word  
For Strafford's other nest-egg—the Scots' War?

*The Puritan.* His fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.

*Fien.* Shall be? It chips the shell, man; peeps  
abroad:

Twelve subsidies!—

Why, how now Vane?

*Rud.* Hush, Fiennes!

*Fien.* Ah? . . . but he was not more a dupe than I,

## STRAFFORD

Or you, or any here the day that Pym  
Returned with the good news. Look up, dear Vane!  
We all believed that Strafford meant us well  
In summoning the Parliament . . .

(*HAMPDEN enters.*)

*Vane* (*starting up*). Now, Hampden,  
Clear me! I would have leave to sleep again!  
I'd look the People in the face again!  
Clear me from having, from the first, hoped, dreamed  
Better of Strafford! Fool!

*Hamp.* You'll grow one day  
A steadfast light to England, Vane!

*Rud.* Ay, Fiennes,  
Strafford revived our Parliaments: before,  
War was but talked of; there's an army, now:  
Still, we've a Parliament. Poor Ireland bears  
Another wrench (she dies the hardest death!)  
Why . . . speak of it in Parliament! and, lo,  
'Tis spoken!—and console yourselves.

*Fien.* The jest!  
We clamoured, I suppose, thus long, to win  
The privilege of laying on ourselves  
A sorer burthen than the King dares lay!

*Rud.* Mark now: we meet at length: complaints  
pour in

From every county: all the land cries out  
On loans and levies, curses ship-money,  
Calls vengeance on the Star-chamber: we lend  
An ear: "ay, lend them all the ears you have,"  
Puts in the King; "my subjects, as you find,  
"Are fretful, and conceive great things of you:  
"Just listen to them, friends: you'll sanction me  
"The measures they most wince at, make them yours  
"Instead of mine, I know: and, to begin,  
"They say my levies pinch them,—raise me straight  
"Twelve subsidies!"

*Fien. and others.* All England cannot furnish  
Twelve subsidies!

*Hol.* But Strafford, just returned  
From Ireland . . . what has he to do with that?

## STRAFFORD

How could he speak his mind? He left before  
The Parliament assembled: Rudyard, friends,  
He could not speak his mind! and Pym, who knows  
Strafford . . .

*Rud.* Would I were sure we know ourselves!  
What is for good, what, bad—who friend, who foe!

*Hol.* Do you count Parliaments no gain?

*Rud.* A gain?  
While the King's creatures overbalance us?  
—There's going on, beside, among ourselves  
A quiet, slow, but most effectual course  
Of buying over, sapping, . . .

*A Puritan.* . . . . Leavening  
The lump till all is leaven.

*A Voice.* Glanville's gone.

*Rud.* I'll put a case; had not the Court declared  
That no sum short of just twelve subsidies  
Will be accepted by the King—our House  
Would have consented to that wretched offer  
To let us buy off Ship-money?

*Hol.* Most like,  
If . . . say six subsidies, will buy it off,  
The House . . .

*Rud.* . . . Will grant them! Hampden, do  
you hear?

Oh, I congratulate you that the King  
Has gained his point at last . . . our own assent  
To that detested tax! all's over then!  
There's no more taking refuge in this room  
And saying, "Let the King do what he will,  
"We, England, are no party to our shame,—  
"Our day will come!" Congratulate with me!

(Pym enters.)

*Vane.* Pym, Strafford called this Parliament, 'tis  
like—

But we'll not have our Parliaments like those  
In Ireland, Pym!

*Rud.* Let him stand forth, that Strafford!  
One doubtful act hides far too many sins;  
It can be stretched no more—and, to my mind,

## STRAFFORD

Begins to drop from those it covers.

*Other Voices.* Pym,  
Let him avow himself! No fitter time!  
We wait thus long for you!

*Rud.* Perhaps, too long!  
Since nothing but the madness of the Court  
In thus unmasking its designs at once  
Had saved us from betraying England. Stay—  
This Parliament is Strafford's: let us vote  
Our list of grievances too black by far  
To suffer talk of subsidies: or best—  
That Ship-money's disposed of long ago  
By England; any vote that's broad enough:  
And then let Strafford, for the love of it,  
Support his Parliament!

*Vane.* And vote as well  
No war's to be with Scotland! Hear you, Pym?  
We'll vote, no War! No part nor lot in it  
For England!

*Many Voices.* Vote, no War! Stop the new levies!  
No Bishop's War! At once! When next we meet!

*Pym.* Much more when next we meet!

—Friends, which of you  
Since first the course of Strafford was in doubt  
Has fallen the most away in soul from me?

*Vane.* I sate apart, even now, under God's eye,  
Pondering the words that should denounce you, Pym,  
In presence of us all, as one at league  
With England's enemy!

*Pym.* You are a good  
And gallant spirit, Henry! Take my hand  
And say you pardon me for all the pain  
Till now! Strafford is wholly ours.

*Many Voices.* 'Tis sure?

*Pym.* Most sure—for Charles dissolves the Par-  
liament

While I speak here! . . .

(Great emotion in the assembly.)

. . . And I must speak, friends, now!  
Strafford is ours! The King detects the change,

## STRAFFORD

Casts Strafford off for ever, and resumes  
His ancient path: no Parliament for us—  
No Strafford for the King!

Come all of you  
To bid the King farewell, predict success  
To his Scots expedition, and receive  
Strafford, our comrade now! The next will be  
Indeed a Parliament!

*Vane.* Forgive me, Pym!

*Voices.* This looks like truth—Strafford can have,  
indeed,

No choice!

*Pym.* Friends, follow me! he's with the King:  
Come Hampden, and come Rudyard, and come Vane—  
This is no sullen day for England, Vane!  
Strafford shall tell you!

*Voices.* To Whitehall then! Come!  
(*Exeunt omnes.*)

### SCENE II.—*Whitehall.*

CHARLES *seated*, STRAFFORD *standing beside a table covered with maps, etc.*

*Cha.* Strafford . . .

*Straf.* Is it a dream? my papers, here—  
Thus—as I left them—all the plans you found  
So happy—(look! The track you pressed my hand  
For pointing out!)—and in this very room  
Over these very plans, you tell me, Sire,  
With the same face, too,—tell me just one thing  
That ruins them! How's this? what may this mean?  
Sire, who has done this?

*Cha.* Strafford, none but I!  
You bade me put the rest away—indeed  
You are alone!

*Straf.* Alone—and like to be!  
No fear, when some unworthy scheme's grown ripe,  
Of those who hatched it leaving you to loose  
The mischief on the world! Laud hatches war,

## STRAFFORD

Falls to his prayers, and leaves the rest to me—  
And I'm alone!

*Cha.* At least, you knew as much  
When first you undertook the war.

*Straf.* My liege,  
Is this the way? I said, since Laud would lap  
A little blood, 'twere best to hurry o'er  
The loathsome business—not to be whole months  
At slaughter—one blow—only one—then, peace—  
Save for the dreams! I said, to please you both  
I'd lead an Irish Army to the West,  
While in the South the English . . . but you look  
As though you had not told me fifty times  
'Twas a brave plan! My Army is all raised—  
I am prepared to join it . . .

*Cha.* Hear me, Strafford!

*Straf.* . . . When, for some little thing, my whole  
design

Is set aside—(where is the wretched paper?)  
I am to lead—(ay, here it is)—to lead  
This English Army: why? Northumberland  
That I appointed, chooses to be sick—  
Is frightened: and, meanwhile, who answers for  
The Irish Parliament? or Army, either?  
Is this my plan? I say, is this my plan?

*Cha.* You are disrespectful, Sir!

*Straf.* Do not believe—  
My liege, do not believe it! I am yours—  
Yours ever—'tis too late to think about—  
To the death, yours! Elsewhere, this untoward step  
Shall pass for mine—the world shall think it mine—  
But, here! But, here! I am so seldom here!  
Seldom with you, my King! I—soon to rush  
Alone—upon a Giant—in the dark!

*Cha.* My Strafford!

*Straf.* (*Seats himself at the table; examines papers  
awhile; then, breaking off*)

. . . "Seize the passes of the Tyne" . .

But don't you see—see all I say is true?  
My plan was sure to prosper,—so, no cause

## STRAFFORD

To ask the Parliament for help; whereas  
We need them—frightfully . . .

*Cha.* Need this Parliament?

*Straf.* —Now, for God's sake, mind—not one error  
more!

We can afford no error—we draw, now,  
Upon our last resource—this Parliament  
Must help us!

*Cha.* I've undone you, Strafford!

*Straf.* Nay—

Nay—don't despond—Sire—'tis not come to that!  
I have not hurt you? Sire—what have I said  
To hurt you? I'll unsay it! Don't despond!  
Sire, do you turn from me?

*Cha.* My friend of friends!

*Straf.* (*After a pause*). We'll make a shift! Leave me  
the Parliament!

They help us ne'er so little but I'll make  
A vast deal out of it. We'll speak them fair:  
They're sitting: that's one great thing: that half gives  
Their sanction to us: that's much: don't despond!  
Why, let them keep their money, at the worst!  
The reputation of the People's help  
Is all we want: we'll make shift yet!

*Cha.* Dear Strafford!

*Straf.* But meantime, let the sum be ne'er so small  
They offer, we'll accept it: any sum—  
For the look of it: the least grant tells the Scots  
The Parliament is ours . . . their staunch ally  
Is ours: that told, there's scarce a blow to strike!  
What will the grant be? What does Glanville think?

*Cha.* Alas . . .

*Straf.* My liege?

*Cha.* Strafford . . .

*Straf.* But answer me!

Have they . . . O surely not refused us all?  
All the twelve subsidies? We never looked  
For all of them! How many do they give?

*Cha.* You have not heard . . .

*Straf.* (What has he done?)—Heard what?



## STRAFFORD

But speak at once, Sire—this grows terrible!

*(The King continuing silent.)*

You have dissolved them!—I'll not leave this man.

*Cha.* 'Twas Vane—his ill-judged vehemence that. . .

*Straf.* Vane?

*Cha.* He told them, as they were about to vote  
The half, that nothing short of all the twelve  
Would serve our turn, or be accepted.

*Straf.* Vane!

Vane! and you promised me that very Vane . .

O God, to have it gone, quite gone from me

The one last hope—I that despair, *my* hope—

That I should reach his heart one day, and cure

All bitterness one day, be proud again

And young again, care for the sunshine too,

And never think of Eliot any more,—

God, and to toil for this, go far for this,

Get nearer, and still nearer, reach this heart—

And find Vane there!

*(Suddenly taking up a paper, and continuing  
with a forced calmness.)*

Northumberland is sick:

Well then, I take the Army: Wilmot leads

The Horse, and he with Conway must secure

The passes of the Tyne: Ormond supplies

My place in Ireland. Here, we'll try the City:

If they refuse a loan . . . debase the coin

And seize the bullion! we've no other choice.

Herbert . . .

*(Flinging down the paper.)* And this while I am here!  
with you!

And there are hosts such, hosts like Vane! I go,—

And, I once gone, they'll close around you, Sire,

When the least pique, pettiest mistrust, is sure

To ruin me—and you along with me!

Do you see that? And you along with me!

—Sire, you'll not ever listen to these men,

And I away, fighting your battle? Sire,

If they—if She—charge me—no matter what

You say, "At any time when he returns

## STRAFFORD

"His head is mine." Don't stop me there! You know  
My head is yours . . . only, don't stop me there!

*Cha.* Too shameful, Strafford! You advised the  
war,

And . . .

*Straf.* I! I! that was never spoken with  
Till it was entered on! That loathe the war!  
That say it is the maddest, wickedest . . .  
Do you know, Charles, I think, within my heart,  
That you would say I did advise the war;  
And if, thro' your own weakness, falsehood, Charles,  
These Scots, with God to help them, drive me back. . .  
You will not step between the raging People  
And me, to say . . .

I knew you! from the first  
I knew you! Never was so cold a heart!  
Remember that I said it—that I never  
Believed you for a moment!

—And, you loved me?

You thought your perfidy profoundly hid  
Because I could not share your whisperings  
With Vane? With Savile? But your hideous heart—  
I had your heart to see, Charles! Oh, to have  
A heart of stone—of smooth, cold, frightful stone!  
Ay, call them! Shall I call for you? The Scots  
Goaded to madness? Or the English—Pym—  
Shall I call Pym, your subject? Oh, you think  
I'll leave them in the dark about it all?  
They shall not know you? Hampden, Pym shall  
not . . .

(*Enter PYM, HAMPDEN, VANE, &c.*)

(*Dropping on his knee.*) Thus favoured with your  
gracious countenance

What shall a rebel League avail against  
Your servant, utterly and ever yours?

(*To the rest*) So, Gentlemen, the King's not even left  
The privilege of bidding me farewell  
Who haste to save the People—that you style  
Your People—from the mercies of the Scots  
And France their friend?

## STRAFFORD

(To CHARLES) Pym's grave grey eyes are fixed  
Upon you, Sire!

(To the rest) Your pleasure, Gentlemen?

Hamp. The King dissolved us—'tis the King we seek  
And not Lord Strafford.

Straf. . . . Strafford, guilty too  
Of counselling the measure: (To CHARLES) (Hush . . .  
you know . . .

You have forgotten . . . Sire, I counselled it!)  
—(Aloud) A heinous matter, truly! But the King  
Will yet see cause to thank me for a course  
Which now, perchance . . . (Sire, tell them so!) . . .  
he blames.

Well, choose some fitter time to make your charge—  
I shall be with the Scots—you understand?—  
Then yelp at me!

Meanwhile, your Majesty  
Binds me, by this fresh token of your trust . . .  
(Under the pretence of an earnest farewell, STRAFFORD  
conducts CHARLES to the door, in such a manner  
as to hide his agitation from the rest: VANE and  
others gazing at them: as the King disappears,  
they turn as by one impulse to PYM, who has not  
changed his original posture of surprise.)

Hamp. Leave we this arrogant strong wicked man!  
Vane and others. Dear Pym! Come out of this un-  
worthy place

To our old room again! Come, dearest Pym!

(STRAFFORD just about to follow the King, looks back.)

Pym. (To STRAFFORD) Keep tryst! the old appoint-  
ment's made anew:

Forget not we shall meet again!

Straf.

Be it so!

And if an Army follows me?

Vane.

His friends

Will entertain your Army!

Pym.

I'll not say

You have misreckoned, Strafford: time will . . .

Perish

Body and spirit! Fool to feign a doubt—

## STRAFFORD

Pretend the scrupulous and nice reserve  
Of one whose prowess is to do the feat  
What share have I in it? Shall I affect  
To see no dismal sign above your head  
When God suspends his ruinous thunder there?  
Strafford is doomed! Touch him no one of you!  
(*Exeunt* PYM, HAMPDEN, *etc.*)  
*Straf.* Pym we shall meet again!

(*Enter* CARLISLE.)

You here, girl?  
Hush—

*Car.*

I know it all—hush, dearest Strafford!

*Straf.*

Ah?

Well. I shall make a sorry soldier, Lucy!  
All Knights begin their enterprise, you know,  
Under the best of auspices; 'tis morn—  
The Lady girds his sword upon the Youth—  
(He's always very young)—the trumpets sound—  
Cups pledge him, and . . . and . . . the King blesses  
him—

You need not turn a page of the Romance  
To learn the Dreadful Giant's fate! Indeed  
We've the fair Lady here; but she apart,—  
A poor man, never having handled lance,  
And rather old, weary, and far from sure  
His Squires are not the Giant's friends: well—well—  
Let us go forth!

*Car.*

Go forth?

*Straf.*

What matters it?

We shall die gloriously—as the book says.

*Car.* To Scotland? not to Scotland?

*Straf.*

Am I sick

Like your good brother, brave Northumberland?  
Beside the walls seem falling on me!

*Car.*

Strafford,

The wind that saps these walls can undermine  
Your camp in Scotland, too! Whence creeps the  
wind?

## STRAFFORD

Have you no eyes except for Pym? Look here!  
A breed of silken creatures lurk and thrive  
In your contempt: you'll vanquish Pym? Friend.  
Vane

Can vanquish you! And Vane you think to fly?—  
Rush on the Scots! Do nobly! Vane's slight sneer  
Shall test success—adjust the praise—suggest  
The faint result: Vane's sneer shall reach you there!  
—You do not listen!

*Straf.* " Oh . . . I give that up—  
There's fate in it—I give all here quite up.  
Care not what Vane does or what Holland does  
Against me! 'Tis so idle to withstand them—  
In no case tell me what they do!

*Car.* But Strafford . . .

*Straf.* I want a little strife, beside—real strife:  
This petty, palace-warfare does me harm:  
I shall feel better, fairly out of it.

*Car.* Why do you smile?

*Straf.* I got to fear them, girl!  
I could have torn his throat at first, that Vane,  
As he leered at me on his stealthy way  
To the Queen's closet, Lucy—but of late  
I often found it in my heart to say  
" Vane—don't traduce me to her! "

*Car.* But the King . . .

*Straf.* The King stood there, 'tis not so long ago,  
—There, and the whisper, Lucy, " Be my friend  
" Of friends! "—My King! I would have . . .

*Car.* . . . Died for him?

*Straf.* . . . Sworn him true, Lucy: I will die for him.

*Car.* (*Aside.*) What can he mean? You'd say he  
loved him still!

(*To STRAFFORD.*) But go not, Strafford! . . . But you  
must renounce

This project on the Scots! Die! wherefore die?  
Charles never loved you!

*Straf.* And he will not, now:  
He's not of those who care the more for you  
That you're unfortunate.

## STRAFFORD

*Car.* Then wherefore die?  
For such a master?

*Straf.* You that told me first  
How good he was—when I must leave true friends  
To find a truer friend!—that drew me here  
From Ireland,—“I had but to show myself  
“And Charles would spurn Vane, Savile, and the  
rest”—

You, girl, to ask me that?

*Car. (Aside.)* If he have set  
His heart abidingly on Charles!

(To STRAFFORD.) Dear friend  
I shall not see you any more!

*Straf.* Yes, girl—  
There's one man here that I shall meet!

*Car. (Aside.)* The King!—  
What way to save him from the King?

My soul . . .

That lent from its own store the charmed disguise  
That clothes the King . . . he shall behold my soul!  
(To STRAFFORD.) Strafford . . . (I shall speak best if  
you'll not gaze  
Upon me.) . . . You would perish, too! So sure! . . .  
Could you but know what 'tis to bear, my Strafford,  
One Image stamped within you, turning blank  
The else imperial brilliance of your mind,—  
A weakness, but most precious,—like a flaw  
I' the diamond which would shape forth some sweet  
face

Yet to create, and meanwhile treasured there  
Lest Nature lose her gracious thought for ever!

*Straf.* When could it be? . . . no! . . . yet . . . was  
it the day

We waited in the anteroom, till Holland  
Should leave the presence-chamber?

*Car.* What?

*Straf.* —That I  
Described to you my love for Charles?

*Car. (Aside.)* Ah, no—  
One must not lure him from a love like that!

## STRAFFORD

Oh, let him love the King and die! 'Tis past . . .  
 I shall not serve him worse for that one brief  
 And passionate hope . . . silent for ever now!  
 (To STRAFFORD) And you are really bound for Scotland  
 then?

I wish you well: you must be very sure  
 Of the King's faith, for Pym and all his crew  
 Will not be idle—setting Vane aside!

*Straf.* If Pym is busy,—you may write of Pym.

*Car.* What need when there's your king to take  
 your part?

He may endure Vane's counsel; but for Pym—  
 Think you he'll suffer Pym to . . .

*Straf.* . . . Girl, your hair

Is glossier than the Queen's!

*Car.* Is that to ask

A curl of me?

*Straf.* Scotland—the weary way!

*Car.* Stay, let me fasten it.

—A rival's, Strafford?

*Straf.* (Showing the George.) He hung it there:  
 twine yours around it, girl!

*Car.* No—no—another time—I trifle so!

And there's a masque on foot: farewell: the Court  
 Is dull: do something to enliven us  
 In Scotland; we expect it at your hands.

*Straf.* I shall not fall in Scotland.

*Car.* Prosper—if

You'll think of me sometimes!

*Straf.* How think of him

And not of you? of you—the lingering streak  
 (A golden one) in my good fortune's eve?

*Car.* Strafford . . .

Well, when the eve has its last  
 streak

The night has its first star!

(Exit.)

*Straf.* That voice of hers . . .

You'd think she had a heart sometimes! His voice  
 Is soft too.

Only God can save him now.

## STRAFFORD

Be Thou about his bed, about his path! . . .  
His path! Where's England's path? Diverging wide,  
And not to join again the track my foot  
Must follow—whither? All that forlorn way—  
Among the tombs! Far—far—till . . . What, they do  
Then join again, these paths? For, huge in the dusk,  
There's—Pym to face!

Why then I have a Foe  
To close with, and a fight to fight at last  
That's worth my soul! What—do they beard the  
King—

And shall the King want Strafford at his need—  
My King—at his great need? Am I not here?

. . . Not in the common blessed market-place  
Pressed on by the rough artisans, so proud  
To catch a glance from Wentworth! They'll lie down  
Hungry and say "Why, it must end some day—  
"Is he not watching for our sake?"

—Not there!

But in Whitehall—the whited sepulchre—  
The . . .

*(At the Window, and looking on London.)*

Curse nothing to-night! Only one name  
They'll curse in all those streets to-night! Whose  
fault?

Did I make kings—set up, the first, a man  
To represent the multitude, receive  
All love in right of them—supplanting them  
Until you love the man and not the king—  
The man with the mild voice and mournful eyes  
That send me forth . . .

To breast the bloody sea  
That sweeps before me—with one star to guide—  
Night has its first supreme forsaken star!

*(Exit.)*

END OF THE SECOND ACT.



# STRAFFORD

## ACT III

### SCENE I.—*Opposite Westminster Hall.*

Sir HENRY VANE, Lord SAVILE, Lord HOLLAND, and  
*others of the Court.*

*Vane.* The Commons thrust you out?

*Savile.* And what kept you  
From sharing their civility?

*Vane.* Kept me?

Fresh news from Scotland, sir! worse than the last  
If that may be! all's up with Strafford there!  
Nothing's to bar the mad Scots marching hither  
The next fine morning! That detained me, sir!  
Well now, before they thrust you out, go on,  
Their speaker . . . did the fellow Lenthall say  
All we set down for him?

*Hol.* Not a word missed!  
Ere he began, we entered, Savile, I  
And Bristol and some more, in hopes to breed  
A wholesome awe in the new Parliament—  
But such a gang of graceless ruffians, Vane!  
They glared at us . . .

*Vane.* So many?

*Savile.* Not a bench  
Without its complement of burley knaves—  
Your son, there, Vane, among them—Hampden leant  
Upon his shoulder—think of that!

*Vane.* I'd think  
On Lenthall's speech, if I could get at it . . .  
He said, I hope, how grateful they should be  
For this unlooked-for summons from the King?

*Hol.* Just as we drilled him . . .

*Vane.* That the Scots will march  
On London?

*Hol.* All, and made so much of it  
A dozen subsidies at least seemed sure  
To follow, when . . .

## STRAFFORD

*Vane.*

Well?

*Hol.*

'Tis a strange thing now!

I've a vague memory of a sort of sound—

A voice—a kind of vast, unnatural voice—

Pym, Sir, was speaking! Savile, help me out,—

What was it all?

*Sav.*

Something about “a matter” . . .

No . . . “a work for England.”

*Bristol.*

“England's great revenge”

He talked of.

*Sav.*

How should I be used to Pym

More than yourselves?

*Hol.*

However that may be,

'Twas something with which we had nought to do,

For we were “strangers” and 'twas “England's  
work”—

(All this while looking us straight in the face)

In other words, our presence might be spared:

So, in the twinkling of an eye, before

I settled to my mind what ugly brute

Was likest Pym just then, they yelled us out,

Locked the doors after us, and here are we!

*Vane.* Old Eliot's method . . .

*Sav.*

Ah, now, Vane, a truce

To Eliot and his times, and the great Duke,

And how to manage Parliaments! 'Twas you

Advised the Queen to summon this—why Strafford

To do him justice would not hear of it!

*Vane.* Say, rather, you have done the best of turns

To Strafford—he's at York—we all know why!

I would you had not set the Scots on Strafford

Till he had put down Pym for us, my lord!

*Sav.* I? did I alter Strafford's plans? did I . . .

(Enter a Messenger.)

*Mes.* The Queen, my lords . . . she sends me . . .  
follow me

At once . . . 'tis very urgent . . . she would have

Your counsel . . . something perilous and strange

Occasions her command.

*Sav.*

We follow, friend!

## STRAFFORD

Now Vane . . . your Parliament will plague us all !

*Vane.* No Strafford here beside !

*Sav.*

If you dare hint

I had a hand in his betrayal, Sir . . .

*Hol.* Nay find a fitter time for quarrels—Pym

Will overmatch the best of you ; and, think,

The Queen !

*Vane.* Come on then (*as they go out.*) . . . understand, I loathe

Strafford as much as any—but he serves

So well to keep off Pym—to screen us all !

I would we had reserved him yet awhile ! (*Exeunt.*)

### SCENE II.—*Whitehall.*

*The QUEEN and CARLISLE.*

*Queen.* It cannot be !

*Car.* It is so.

*Queen.*

Why the House

Have hardly met !

*Car.* They met for that.

*Queen.*

No—no—

Meet to impeach Lord Strafford ! 'Tis a jest !

*Car.* A bitter one.

*Queen.*

Consider ! 'Tis the House

We summoned so reluctantly—which nothing

But the disastrous issue of the war

Persuaded us to summon ; they'll wreak all

Their spite on us, no doubt ; but the old way

Is to begin by talk of grievances !

They have their grievances to busy them !

*Car.* Pym has begun his speech.

*Queen.*

Where's Vane ? . . . That is

Pym will impeach Lord Strafford if he leaves

His Presidency—he's at York, you know,

Since the Scots beat him—why should he leave York ?

*Car.* Because the King sends for him.

*Queen.*

Ah . . . but if

The King did send for him, he let him know

## STRAFFORD.

We had been forced to call a Parliament—  
A step which Strafford, now I come to think,  
Was vehement against . . .

*Car.* The policy  
Escaped him of first striking Parliaments  
To earth, then setting them upon their feet  
And giving them a sword: but this is idle!  
—Did the King send for Strafford?

He will come.

*Queen.* And what am I to do?

*Car.* What do! Fail, Madam!  
Be ruined for his sake! what matters how  
So it but stand on record that you made  
An effort—only one?

*Queen.* The King's away  
At Theobald's.

*Car.* Send for him at once—he must  
Dissolve the House.

*Queen.* Wait till Vane finds the truth  
Of the report—then . . .

*Car.* . . . it will matter little  
What the king does. Strafford that serves you all—  
That's fighting for you now!

(*Enter Sir H. VANE.*)

*Vane.* The Commons, Madam,  
Are sitting with closed doors—a huge debate—  
No lack of noise—but nothing, I should guess,  
Concerning Strafford: Pym has certainly  
Not spoken yet.

*Queen.* (*To CARLISLE.*) You hear?

*Car.* I do not hear  
That the King's sent for!

*Vane.* Savile will be able  
To tell you more.

(*Enter HOLLAND.*)

*Queen.* The last news, Holland?

## STRAFFORD

*Hol.*

*Pym*

Is raving like a fiend! The whole House means  
To follow him together to Whitehall  
And force the King to give up Strafford.

*Queen.*

*Strafford?*

*Hol.* If they content themselves with Strafford!  
Laud

Is talked of, Cottington and Windebank too,  
Pym has not left out one of them . . . I would  
You heard Pym raving!

*Queen.*

*Vane, find out the King!*

Tell the king, Vane, the People follow Pym  
To brave us at Whitehall!

*(Enter SAVILE.)*

*Sav.*

Not to Whitehall—

'Tis to the Lords they go—they'll seek redress  
On Strafford from his peers—the legal way,  
They call it . . .

*Queen.*

*(Wait, Vane!)*

*Sav.*

. . . But the adage gives

Long life to threatened men! Strafford can save  
Himself so readily: at York, remember,  
In his own county, what has he to fear?  
The Commons only mean to frighten him  
From leaving York.

*Queen.*

Surely he will not come!

Carlisle, he will not come!

*Car.*

Once more, the King

Has sent for Strafford—He will come.

*Vane.*

O doubtless;

And bring destruction with him; that's his way.  
What but his coming spoilt all Conway's plan?  
The King must take his counsel, choose his friends,  
Be wholly ruled by him! What's the result?  
The North that was to rise—Ireland to help—  
What came of it? In my poor mind a fright  
Is no prodigious punishment.

*Car.*

A fright?

## STRAFFORD

Pym will fail worse than Strafford if he thinks  
To frighten him. (*To the QUEEN.*) You will not save  
him, then?

*Sav.* When something like a charge is made, the  
King

Will best know how to save him: and 'tis clear  
That, while he suffers nothing by the matter,  
The King will reap advantage: this in question,  
No dinning you with ship-money complaints!

*Queen.* (*To CARLISLE.*) If we dissolve them, who  
will pay the army?

Protect us from the insolent Scots?

*Car.* In truth

I know not, Madam: Strafford's fate concerns  
Me little: you desired to learn what course  
Would save him: I obey you.

*Vane.* Notice, too,

There can't be fairer ground for taking full  
Revenge—(*Strafford's revengeful*)—than he'll have  
Against this very Pym.

*Queen.* Why, he shall claim  
Vengeance on Pym!

*Vane.* And Strafford, who is he

To 'scape unscathed amid the accidents  
That harass all beside? I, for my part,  
Should look for something of discomfiture  
Had the King trusted me so thoroughly  
And been so paid for it.

*Hol.* He'll keep at York:

All will blow over: he'll return no worse—  
Humbled a little—thankful for a place  
Under as good a man—Oh, we'll dispense  
With seeing Strafford for a month or two!

(*Enter STRAFFORD.*)

*Queen.* You here!

*Straf.* The King sends for me, Madam.

*Queen.* Sir . . .

The King . . .

## STRAFFORD

*Straf.* An urgent matter that imports the King . . .  
*(To CARLISLE.)* Why, Lucy, what's in agitation now  
 That all this muttering and shrugging, see,  
 Begins at me? They do not speak!

*Car.* . . . Oh welcome!  
 . . . And we are proud of you . . . all very proud  
 To have you with us, Strafford . . . you were brave  
 At Durham . . . You did well there . . . Had you not  
 Been stayed you might have . . . we said, even now,  
 Our last, last hope's in you!

*Vane.* *(To CARLISLE.)* The Queen would speak  
A word with you!

*Straf.* *(To VANE.)* Will one of you vouchsafe  
 To signify my presence to the King?

*Sav.* An urgent matter?

*Straf.* . . . None that touches you,  
 Lord Savile! Say it were some treacherous,  
 Sly, pitiful intriguing with the Scots—  
 You would go free, at least! *(Aside.)* They half  
 divine  
 My purpose! *(To the QUEEN.)* Madam, shall I see the  
 King?

The service I would render much concerns  
 His welfare.

*Queen.* . . . But his Majesty, my lord,  
 May not be here, may . . .

*Straf.* . . . Its importance, then,  
 Must plead excuse for this withdrawal, Madam—  
 And for the grief it gives Lord Savile here.

*Queen.* *(Who has been conversing with VANE and  
 HOLLAND.)* The King will see you, Sir.  
*(To CARLISLE.)* . . .

Mark me: Pym's worst  
 Is done by now—he has impeached the Earl,  
 Or found the Earl too strong for him, by now;  
 Let us not seem instructed! We should work  
 No good to Strafford, but deform ourselves  
 With shame in the world's eye! *(To STRAFFORD.)* His  
 Majesty

Has much to say with you.

*Straf.* *(Aside.)* . . .

Time fleeting too!

## STRAFFORD

(To CARLISLE.) No means of getting them away,  
Carlisle?

What does she whisper? Does she know my purpose?  
What does she think of it? Get them away!

Queen. (To CARLISLE.) He comes to baffle Pym—he  
thinks the danger

Far off—tell him no word of it—a time

For help will come—we'll not be wanting, then!

Keep him in play, Carlisle—you, self-possessed

And calm! (To STRAFFORD.) To spare your Lordship  
some delay

I will myself acquaint the King. (To CARLISLE.)  
Beware!

(*Exeunt* QUEEN, VANE, HOLLAND and SAVILE.)

Straf. She knows it?

Car. . . . . Tell me, Strafford . . .

Straf. . . . . Afterward!

The moment's the great moment of all time!

She knows my purpose?

Car. . . . . Thoroughly—just now

She bade me hide it from you.

Straf. . . . . Quick, dear girl . . .

The whole grand scheme?

Car. (*Aside*.) . . . Ah, he would learn if they  
Connive at Pym's procedure! Could they but  
Have once apprized the King! But there's no time  
For falsehood, now. (To STRAFFORD.) Strafford, the  
whole is known.

Straf. Known and approved?

Car. . . . . Hardly discountenanced.

Straf. And the king—say the king consents as well!

Car. The king's not yet informed, but will not dare  
To interpose.

Straf. . . . . What need to wait him, then?  
He'll sanction it! I stayed, girl tell him, long!  
It vexed me to the soul—this waiting here—  
You know him—there's no counting on the king!  
Tell him I waited long!

Car. (*Aside*.) . . . What can he mean?  
Rejoice at the king's hollowness?



## STRAFFORD

*Straf.* I knew  
They would be glad of it,—all over once,  
I knew they would be glad . . . but he'd contrive,  
The Queen and he, to mar, by helping it,  
An angel's making!

*Car.* (*Aside.*) Is he mad? (*To STRAFFORD.*) Dear  
Strafford,  
You were not wont to look so happy.

*Straf.* Girl,  
I tried obedience thoroughly: I took  
The king's wild plan . . . of course, ere I could reach  
My army—Conway ruined it: I drew  
The wrecks together, raised all heaven and earth,  
And would have fought the Scots—the King at once  
Made truce with them: then, Lucy, then, dear girl,  
God put it in my mind to love, serve, die  
For Charles—but never to obey him more!  
While he endured their insolence at Rippon  
I fell on them at Durham.

. . . But you'll tell  
The king I waited? All the anteroom  
Is filled with my adherents.

*Car.* Strafford—Strafford  
What daring act is this you hint?

*Straf.* No—no!  
'Tis here—not daring if you knew!—all here!  
(*Drawing papers from his breast.*)

Full proof—see—ample proof—does the Queen know  
I have such damning proof? Bedford and Essex,  
Broke, Warwick, Savile (did you notice Savile?  
The simper that I spoilt?) Say, Mandeville—  
Sold to the Scots, body and soul, by Pym!

*Car.* Great heaven!

*Straf.* From Savile and his lords, to Pym—  
I crush them, girl—Pym shall not ward the blow  
Nor Savile crawl aside from it! The Court  
And the Cabal—I crush them!

*Car.* And you go . . .  
Strafford,—and now you go? . . .

*Straf.* About no work

## STRAFFORD

In the back-ground, I promise you! I go  
Straight to the House of Lords to claim these men.  
Mainwaring!

*Car.* Stay—stay, Strafford!

*Straf.* She'll return—

The Queen—some little project of her own—  
No time to lose—the King takes fright perhaps—

*Car.* Pym's strong, remember!

*Straf.* Very strong—as fits  
The Faction's Head . . . with no offence to Hampden,  
Vane, Rudyard and my loving Hollis—one  
And all they lodge within the Tower to-night  
In just equality. Bryan! Mainwaring!

*(Many of his Adherents enter.)*

The Peers debate just now (a lucky chance)  
On the Scots war—my visit's opportune:  
When all is over, Bryan, you'll proceed  
To Ireland: these dispatches, mark me, Bryan,  
Are for the Deputy, and these for Ormond—  
We'll want the Army here—my Army, raised  
At such a cost, that should have done such good,  
And was inactive all the time! no matter—  
We'll find a use for it. Willis . . . no—You!  
You, friend, make haste to York—bear this, at  
once . . .

Or,—better stay for form's sake—see yourself  
The news you carry You remain with me  
To execute the Parliament's command,  
Mainwaring—help to seize the lesser knaves:  
Take care there's no escaping at backdoors!  
To not have one escape—mind me—not one!  
I seem revengeful, Lucy? Did you know  
What these men dare!

*Car.* It is so much they dare!

*Straf.* I proved that long ago; my turn is now!  
Keep sharp watch, Goring, on the citizens;  
Observe who harbours any of the brood  
That scramble off: be sure they smart for it!

## STRAFFORD

Our coffers are but lean.

And you, girl, too,  
Shall have your task—deliver this to Laud—  
Laud will not be the slowest in my praise!  
“Thorough” he’ll say!

—Foolish, to be so glad!  
This sort of life is vivid, after all!  
’Tis worth while, Lucy, having foes like mine  
For the dear bliss of crushing them! To-day  
Is worth the living for!

*Car.* That reddening brow!  
You seem . . .

*Straf.* Well—do I not? I would be well—  
I could not but be well on such a day!  
And, this day ended, ’tis of slight import  
How long the ravaged frame subjects the soul  
In Strafford!

*Car.* Noble Strafford!

*Straf.* No farewell!  
I’ll see you, girl, to-morrow—the first thing!  
—If she should come to stay me!

*Car.* Go—’tis nothing—  
Only my heart that swells—it has been thus  
Ere now—go, Strafford!

*Straf.* To-night, then, let it be!  
I must see Him . . . I’ll see you after Him . . .  
I’ll tell you how Pym looked. Follow me, friends!  
You, gentlemen, shall see a sight this hour  
To talk of all your lives. Close after me!  
“My friend of friends!”

(*Exeunt STRAFFORD, &c.*)

*Car.* The King—ever the King!  
No thought of one beside, whose little word  
Unveils the King to him—one word from me—  
Which yet I do not breathe!

Ah, have I spared  
Strafford a pang, and shall I seek reward  
Beyond that memory? Surely too, some way  
He is the better for my love . . . No, no  
He would not look so joyous—I’ll believe

## STRAFFORD

His very eye would never sparkle thus,  
Had I not prayed for him this long, long while!

(Exit.)

SCENE III.—*The Ante-chamber of the House of Lords.*

*Many of the Presbyterian Party. The Adherents of*  
STRAFFORD, &c.

*A Group of PRESBYTERIANS.*—1. I tell you he struck Maxwell—Maxwell sought

To stay the Earl : he struck him and passed on.

2. Fear as you may, keep a good countenance  
Before these ruffians!

3.                      Strafford here the first—  
With the great army at his back!

4. No doubt !

I would Pym had made haste . . . that's Bryan,  
hush—

The fellow pointing.

STRAFFORD'S *Followers*.—1. Mark these worthies,  
now!

2. A goodly gathering! "Where the carcass is  
There shall the eagles" . . . what's the rest?

3. For eagles  
Say crows.

A PRESBYTERIAN. Stand back, Sirs!

*One of STRAFFORD'S Followers.* Are we in Geneva?

A PRESBYTERIAN. No—nor in Ireland, we have  
leave to breathe.

*One of STRAFFORD'S Followers.* Really? Behold  
how grand a thing it is

To serve "King Pym"! There's someone at Whitehall  
That lives obscure, but Pym lives . . .

*The* PRESBYTERIAN. Nearer !

*A Follower of* STRAFFORD. Higher

We look to see him! [To his Companions.] I'm to have St. John

In charge; was he among the knaves just now

## STRAFFORD

That followed Pym within there?

*Another.*

The gaunt man

Talking with Rudyard. Did the Earl expect  
Pym at his heels so fast? I like it not.

(*Enter MAXWELL.*)

*Another.* Why, man, they rush into the net! Here's  
Maxwell—

Ha, Maxwell?—How the brethren flock around  
The fellow! Do you feel the Earl's hand yet  
Upon your shoulder, Maxwell?

*Max.*

Gentlemen,

Stand back! a great thing passes here.

*A Follower of STRAFFORD.* (*To another.*) The Earl  
Is at his work! [*To M.*] Say, Maxwell, what great  
thing!

Speak out! [*To a Presbyterian.*] Friends, I've a kind  
ness for you! Friends,

I've seen you with St. John . . . O stockishness!  
Wear such a ruff, and never call to mind  
St. John's head in a charger?

What—the plague—

Not laugh?

*Another.* Say Maxwell, what it is!

*Another.*

Hush—wait—

The jest will be to wait—

*First.*

And who's to bear

These quiet hypocrites? You'd swear they came . .  
Came . . . just as we come!

(*A Puritan enters hastily and without observing*  
*STRAFFORD'S Followers.*)

*The PURITAN.*

How goes on the work?

Has Pym . .

*A Follower of STRAFFORD.* The secret's out at last—  
Aha.

The carrion's scented! Welcome, crow the first!  
Gorge merrily you with the blinking eye!

## STRAFFORD

"King Pym has fallen!"

*The PURITAN.* . . . Pym?

*A STRAFFORD.* . . . Pym!

*A PRESBYTERIAN.* . . . Only Pym?

*Many of STRAFFORD'S Followers.* No, brother—not  
Pym only—Vane as well—

Rudyard as well—Hampden—Saint John as well—

*A PRESBYTERIAN.* My mind misgives . . . can it be  
true?

*Another.* . . . Lost! Lost!

*A STRAFFORD.* Say we true, Maxwell?

*The PURITAN.* . . . Pride before destruction,

*A* haughty spirit goeth before a fall.

*Many of STRAFFORD'S Followers.* Ah now! The very  
thing! A word in season!

A golden apple in a silver picture

To greet Pym as he passes!

*(The folding-doors at the back begin to open, noise  
and light issuing.)*

*Max.* . . . Stand back, all!

*Many of the PRESBYTERIANS.* I'll die with Pym!  
And I!

*STRAFFORD'S Followers.* . . . Now for the text—

He comes! Quick!

*The PURITAN (With uplifted arms.)* How hath the  
Oppressor ceased!

The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked:

The sceptre of the Rulers—he who smote

The People in wrath with a continual stroke—

That ruled the nations in his anger . . . He

Is persecuted and none hindereth!

*(At the beginning of this speech, the doors open, and  
STRAFFORD in the greatest disorder, and amid  
cries from within of "Void the House," staggers  
out. When he reaches the front of the Stage,  
silence.)*

## STRAFFORD

*Straf.* Impeach me! Pym! I never struck, I think,  
The felon on that calm insulting mouth  
When it proclaimed—Pym's mouth proclaimed me . . .  
God!

Was it a word, only a word that held  
The outrageous blood back on my heart . . . which  
beats!

Which beats! Some one word . . . "Traitor," did  
he say

Bending that eye, brimful of bitter fire,  
Upon me?

*Max.* (*Advancing.*) In the Commons' name, their  
servant  
Demands Lord Strafford's sword.

*Straf.* . . . What did you say?

*Max.* The Commons bid me ask your Lordship's  
sword.

*Straf.* (*suddenly recovering, and looking round,  
draws it, and turns to his followers.*) Let us go  
forth—follow me, gentlemen—

Draw your swords too—cut any down that bar us?

On the King's service! Maxwell, clear the way!

(*The PRESBYTERIANS prepare to dispute his passage.*)

*Straf.* Ha—true! . . . That is, you mistake me,  
utterly—

I will stay—the King himself shall see me—here—

Here—I will stay, Mainwaring!—First of all,

(*To MAXWELL*) Your tablets, fellow! (*He writes on  
them.*)

(*To MAINWARING.*) Give that to the King!

Yes, Maxwell, for the next half-hour, I will . . .

I will remain your prisoner, I will!

Nay, you shall take my sword!

(*MAXWELL advances to take it.*)

No—no—not that!

Their blood, perhaps, may wipe out all thus far—

And up to that—not that! Why, friend, you see

When the King lays his head beneath my foot

It will not pay for that! Go, all of you!

*Max.* I grieve, my lord, to disobey: none stir.

## STRAFFORD

*Straf.* This gentle Maxwell!—Do not touch him,  
Bryan!

(*To the PRESBYTERIANS.*) Whichever cur of you will  
carry this

I'll save him from the fate of all the rest—

I'll have him made a Peer—I'll . . . none will go?

None? (*Cries from within of "STRAFFORD."*)

(*To his FOLLOWERS.*) Slingsby, I've loved you at least  
—my friend,

Stab me! I have not time to tell you why . . .

You then, dear Bryan! You Mainwaring, then!

. . . Ah, that's because I spoke so hastily

At Allerton—the King had vexed me . . .

(*To the PRESBYTERIANS.*) You

Miscreants—you then—that I'll exterminate!

—Not even you? If I live over it

The King is sure to have your heads—you know

I'm not afraid of that—you understand

That if I chose to wait—made up my mind

To live this minute—he would do me right!

But what if I can't live this minute through?

If nothing can repay that minute? Pym

With his pursuing smile—Pym to be there!

(*Louder cries of "STRAFFORD."*)

The King! I troubled him—stood in the way

Of his negotiations—was the one

Great obstacle to peace—the Enemy

Of Scotland—and he sent for me—from York—

My safety guaranteed—having prepared

A Parliament! I see! And at Whitehall

The Queen was whispering with Vane . . . I see

The trap! I curse the King! I wish Pym well!

Wish all his brave friends well! Say, all along

Strafford was with them—all along, at heart,

I hated Charles and wish them well! And say

(*tearing off the George and dashing it down*)

That as I tread this gew-gaw under foot,

I cast his memory from me! One stroke, now!

(*His own adherents disarm him. Renewed cries of*

"STRAFFORD.")



## STRAFFORD

I'll not go . . . they shall drag me by the hair!  
(*Changing suddenly to calm.*) England! I see her  
arm in this! I yield.

Why—'tis the fairest triumph! Why desire  
To cheat them? I would never stoop to that—  
Be mean enough for that! Let all have end!  
Don't repine, Slingsby . . . have they not a right?  
They claim me—hearken—lead me to them, Bryan!  
No—I myself should offer up myself.

Pray you now . . . Pym awaits me . . . pray you  
now!

(*Putting aside those who attempt to support him,  
STRAFFORD reaches the door—they open wide.  
HAMPDEN, etc., and a crowd discovered; and  
at the bar, PYM standing apart. As STRAFFORD  
kneels the scene shuts.*)

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

## ACT IV

### SCENE I.—*Whitehall*

*The KING, the QUEEN, HOLLIS, CARLISLE. (VANE,  
HOLLAND, SAVILE, in the background.)*

*Car.* Answer them, Hollis, for his sake!—One  
word!

*Cha.* (*To HOLLIS.*) You stand, silent and cold, as  
though I were

Deceiving you—my friend, my playfellow  
Of other times! What wonder after all?  
Just so I dreamed my People loved me!

*Hol.* Sire,  
It is yourself that you deceive, not me!  
You'll quit me comforted—your mind made up  
That since you've talked thus much and grieved thus  
much,

## STRAFFORD

All you can do for Strafford has been done.

*Queen.* If you kill Strafford . . . come, we grant  
you leave,

Suppose . . .

*Hol.* I may withdraw, Sire?

*Car.* . . . Hear them out!

'Tis the last chance for Strafford! Hear them out!

*Hol.* "If we kill Strafford"—on the eighteenth  
day

Of Strafford's trial—*We!*

*Cha.* Pym, my good Hollis—

Pym, I should say!

*Hol.* Ah, true—Sire, pardon me!

You witness our proceedings every day,  
But the screened gallery, I might have guessed,  
Admits of such a partial glimpse at us—  
Pym takes up all the room, shuts out the view!  
Still, on my honour, Sire, the rest of the place  
Is not unoccupied: The Commons sit  
—That's England; Ireland sends, and Scotland too,  
Their representatives: the Peers that judge  
Are easily distinguished; one remarks  
The People here and there . . . but the close curtain  
Must hide so much!

*Queen.* Acquaint your insolent crew,  
This day the curtain shall be dashed aside!  
It served a purpose!

*Hol.* Think! This very day?  
Ere Strafford rises to defend himself?

*Cha.* I will defend him, Sir! sanction the past—  
This day—it ever was my purpose! Rage  
At me, not Strafford! Oh I shall be paid  
By Strafford's look!

*Car.* (To HOLLIS.) Nobly! Oh will he not  
Do nobly?

*Hol.* Sire, you will do honestly;  
And, for that look, I too would be a king!

*Cha.* (after a pause.) Only, to do this now—just  
when they seek  
To make me out a tyrant—one that's deaf

## STRAFFORD

To subjects' prayers,—shall I oppose them now?  
It seems their will the Trial should proceed . . .  
'Tis palpably their will!

*Hol.* You'll lose your throne:  
But it were no bright moment save for that!  
Strafford, your prime support, the sole roof-tree  
That props this quaking House of Privilege,  
(Floods come, winds beat, and see—the treacherous  
sand!)

Doubtless if the mere putting forth an arm  
Could save him, you'd save Strafford!

*Cha.* And they mean  
Calmly to consummate this wrong! No hope?  
This ineffaceable wrong! No pity then?

*Hol.* No plague in store for perfidy?—Farewell!  
You summoned me . . . (To CARLISLE.) You, Lady,  
bade me come

To save the Earl! I came, thank God for it,  
To learn how far such perfidy can go!  
. . . You dare to talk with me of saving him  
Who have just ruined Strafford!

*Cha.* I?

*Hol.* See, now!  
Eighteen days long he throws, one after one,  
Our charges back: a blind moth-eaten law!  
—He'll break from us at last! And whom to thank?  
The Mouse that gnawed the Lion's net for him  
Got a good friend,—but he, the other Mouse,  
That looked on while the Lion freed himself—  
Fared he so well, does any fable say?

*Cha.* What can you mean?

*Hol.* Pym never could have proved  
Strafford's design of bringing up the troops  
To force this kingdom to obedience: Vane—  
Your servant, Vane . . .

*Queen.* Well, Sir?

*Hol.* Has proved it.

*Cha.* Vane?

*Hol.* This day! Did Vane deliver up or no  
Those notes which, furnished by his son to Pym,

## STRAFFORD

Have sealed . . .

*Cha.* Speak Vane! As I shall live, I know  
Nothing that Vane has done! What treason next?  
I wash my hands of it! Vane, speak the truth!  
—Ask Vane himself!

*Hol.* I will not speak to Vane  
Who speak to Pym and Hampden every day!  
*Queen.* Speak to Vane's master then! Why should  
he wish

For Strafford's death?

*Hol.* Why? Strafford cannot turn  
As you sit there—bid you come forth and say  
If every hateful act were not set down  
In his commission?—Whether you contrived  
Or no that all the violence should seem  
His work, the gentle ways—your own, as if  
He counteracted your kind impulses  
While . . . but you know what he could say! And then  
Would he produce, mark you, a certain charge  
To set your own express commands aside,  
If need were, and be blameless! He'd say, then . . .

*Cha.* Hold!

*Hol.* . . . Say who bade him break the  
Parliament,—

Find out some pretext to set up sword-law . . .

*Queen.* Retire, Sir!

*Cha.* Vane—once more—what Vane dares do  
I know not . . . he is rash . . . a fool . . . I know  
Nothing of Vane!

*Hol.* Well—I believe you; Sire  
Believe me, in return, that . . .

(*Turning to CARLISLE.*) Gentle Lady,  
The few words I would say the stones might hear  
Sooner than these . . . I'll say them all to you,  
You, with the heart! The question, trust me, takes  
Another shape, to-day: 'tis not if Charles  
Or England shall succumb,—but which shall pay  
The forfeit, Strafford or his Master: Sire,  
You loved me once . . . think on my warning now!

(*Exit.*)

## STRAFFORD

*Cha.* On you and on your warning both!—Carlisle!  
That paper!

*Queen.* But consider!

*Cha.* Give it me!

There—signed—will that content you?—Do not speak  
You have betrayed me, Vane!—See, any day  
(According to the tenour of that paper)  
He bids your brother bring the Army up,  
Strafford shall head it and take full revenge!  
Seek Strafford! Let him have it, look, before  
He rises to defend himself!

*Queen.* In truth?

Clever of Hollis, now, to work a change  
Like this! You were reluctant . . .

*Cha.* Say, Carlisle

Your brother Percy brings the Army up—  
Falls on the Parliament—(I'll think of you  
My Hollis!)—say we plotted long . . . 'tis mine,  
The scheme is mine, remember! Say I cursed  
Vane's folly in your hearing! If that man  
Does rise to do us shame, the fault shall lie  
With you, Carlisle!

*Car.* Nay, fear not me! but still

That's a bright moment, Sire, you throw away . . .  
Oh, draw the veil and save him!

*Queen.* Go, Carlisle!

*Car. (aside and going).* I shall see Strafford—speak  
to him: my heart

Must never beat so, then!

And if I tell

The truth? What's gained by falsehood? There they  
stand

Whose trade it is—whose life it is! How vain  
To gild such rottenness! Strafford shall know,  
Thoroughly know them!

*The Queen (as she leaves the KING, &c.)* Trust to me!

[To CARLISLE.] Carlisle,

You seem inclined, alone of all the Court,  
To serve poor Strafford: this bold plan of yours  
Merits much praise, and yet . . .

## STRAFFORD

*Car.* Time presses, Madam.

*Queen.* Yet . . . may it not be something premature?  
Strafford defends himself to-day—reserves  
Some wondrous effort . . . one may well suppose—  
He'll say some overwhelming fact, Carlisle!

*Car.* Aye, Hollis hints as much.

*Cha.* Why linger then?  
Haste with the scheme—my scheme—I shall be there  
To watch his look! Tell him I watch his look!

*Queen.* Stay, we'll precede you!

*Car.* At your pleasure.

*Cha.* Say . . .  
Say . . . Vane is hardly ever at Whitehall!  
I shall be there, remember!

*Car.* Doubt me not!

*Cha.* On our return, Carlisle, we wait you here!

*Car.* I'll bring his answer; Sire, I follow you.

(*Exeunt K., &c.*)

Ah . . . but he would be very sad to find  
The King so faithless, and I take away  
All that he cares to live for: let it go—  
'Tis the King's scheme!

My Strafford, I can save . . .  
Nay, I *have* saved you—yet am scarce content,  
Because my poor name will not cross your mind . . .  
Strafford, how much I am unworthy you!

(*Exit.*)

SCENE II.—*A Passage adjoining Westminster Hall.*

*Many groups of Spectators of the Trial (which is  
visible from the back of the Stage)—Officers of the  
Court, &c.*

*1st Spec.* More crowd than ever! . . . Not know  
Hampden, man?

That's he—by Pym—Pym that is speaking now!  
No, truly—if you look so high you'll see  
Little enough of either!

## STRAFFORD

*2nd Spec.* Hush . . . Pym's arm  
Points like a prophet's rod.

*3rd Spec.* Ay—ay—we've heard  
Some pretty speaking . . . yet the Earl escapes!

*4th Spec.* I fear it: just a foolish word or two  
About his children . . . and they see, forsooth,  
Not England's Foe in Strafford—but the Man  
Who, sick, half-blind . . .

*2nd Spec.* What's that Pym's saying now  
That makes the curtains flutter . . . look! A hand  
Clutches them . . . Ah! The King's hand!

*5th Spec.* I had thought  
Pym was not near so tall! What said he, friend?

*2nd Spec.* "Nor is this way a novel way of blood" . . .  
And the Earl turns as if to . . . look! look!

*Many Spectators.* Heaven—  
What ails him . . . no—he rallies . . . see—goes on  
And Strafford smiles. Strange!

(*Enter a PURITAN.*)

*The Puritan.* Haselrig!

*Many Spectators.* Friend? Friend?

*The Puritan.* Lost—utterly lost . . . just when we  
looked for Pym

To make a stand against the ill effects  
Of the Earl's speech! Is Haselrig without?  
Pym's message is to him!

(*Exit.*)

*3rd Spec.* Now, said I true?  
Will the Earl leave them yet at fault or no?

*1st Spec.* Never believe it, man! These notes of  
Vane's  
Ruin the Earl.

*5th Spec.* A brave end . . . not a whit  
Less firm, less . . . Pym all over! Then, the Trial  
Is closed . . . no . . . Strafford means to speak again!

*An Officer.* Stand back, there!

*5th Spec.* Why the Earl is coming hither!  
Before the court breaks up! His brother, look,—  
You'd say he deprecated some fierce act

## STRAFFORD

In Strafford's mind just now !

*An Officer.*

Stand back, I say !

*2nd Spec.* Who's the veiled woman that he talks with ?

*Many Spectators.*

Hush—

The Earl ! the Earl !

[*Enter STRAFFORD, SLINGSBY and other Secretaries, HOLLIS, CARLISLE, MAXWELL, BALFOUR, &c. STRAFFORD converses with CARLISLE.*]

*Hol.*

So near the end ! Be patient—

Return !

*Straf.* [*To his Secretaries.*] Here—anywhere—or—  
'tis freshest here . . .

(*To spend one's April here—the blossom-month !*)

Set it down here ! [*They arrange a table, papers, &c.*]

What, Pym to quail, to sink

Because I glance at him, yet . . .

Well, to end—

What's to be answered, Slingsby ? Let us end !

(*To CARLISLE.*) Girl, I refuse his offer ; whatsoe'er

It be ! Too late ! Tell me no word of him !

(*To HOLLIS.*) 'Tis something, Hollis, I assure you that—

To stand, sick as you are, some eighteen days

Fighting for life and fame against a pack

Of very curs, that lie thro' thick and thin,

Eat flesh and bread by wholesale, and can't say

"Strafford" if it would take my life !

*Car.*

Be kind

This once ! Glance at the paper . . . if you will

But glance at it. . . .

*Straf.*

Already at my heels !

Pym's faulting bloodhounds scent the track again !

Peace, girl ! Now, Slingsby !

(*Messengers from Lane and other of STRAFFORD'S Counsel within the Hall are coming and going during the Scene.*)



## STRAFFORD

*Straf.* (*setting himself to write and dictate.*) I shall  
beat you, Hollis!

Do you know that? In spite of all your tricks—  
In spite of Pym! Your Pym that shrank from me!  
Eliot would have contrived it otherwise!

(*To a Messenger.*) In truth? This slip, tell Lane, con-  
tains as much

As I can call to mind about the matter.

(*To HOLLIS.*) Eliot would have disdained . . .

(*Calling after the Messenger.*) And Radcliffe, say—

The only person who could answer Pym—

Is safe in prison, just for that!

(*Continuing to HOLLIS.*) Well—well—

It had not been recorded in that case,

I baffled you!

(*To CARLISLE.*) Nay, girl, why look so grieved?

All 's gained without the King! You saw Pym quail?

. . . What shall I do when they acquit me, think you,

But tranquilly resume my task as though

Nothing had intervened since I proposed

To call that traitor to account! Such tricks,

Trust me, shall not be played a second time—

Even against old Laud, with his grey hair . . .

Your good work, Hollis!—And to make amends

You, Lucy, shall be there when I impeach

Pym and his fellows!

*Hol.*

Wherefore not protest

Against our whole proceeding long ago?

Why feel indignant now? Why stand this while

Enduring patiently . . .

*Straf.* (*To CARLISLE.*) Girl, I'll tell you—

You—and not Pym . . . you, the slight graceful girl

Tall for a flowering lily—and not Charles . . .

Why I stood patient! I was fool enough

To see the will of England in Pym's will—

To dream that I had wronged her—and to wait

Her judgment,—when, behold, in place of it . . .

(*To a Messenger who whispers.*) Tell Lane to answer  
no such question! Law . . .

I grapple with their law! I'm here to try

## STRAFFORD

My actions by their standard, not my own!  
Their Law allowed that levy . . . what's the rest  
To Pym, or Lane, or any but myself?

*Car.* Then cast not thus your only chance away—  
The King's so weak . . . secure this chance! 'Twas Vane  
—Vane, recollect, who furnished Pym the notes . . .

*Straf.* Fit . . . very fit . . . those precious notes of  
Vane,

To close the trial worthily! I feared  
Some spice of nobleness might linger yet  
To spoil the character of all the past!  
It pleased me . . . and (*rising passionately*) I will go  
back and say

As much—to them—to England! Follow me!  
I have a word to say! There! my defence  
Is done!

(*To CARLISLE.*) Stay . . . why be proud? Why care  
to own

My gladness—my surprise? . . . no—not surprise!  
Oh, why insist upon the little pride  
Of doing all myself and sparing him  
The pain? Girl, say the triumph is my King's!  
When Pym grew pale, and trembled, and sank down—  
His image was before me . . . could I fail?  
Girl, care not for the past—so indistinct—  
Obscure—there's nothing to forgive in it  
'Tis so forgotten! From this day begins  
A new life, founded on a new belief  
In Charles . . .

*Hol.* Pym comes . . . tell Pym it is unfair!  
Appeal to Pym! Hampden—and Vane! see, Strafford!  
Say how unfair . . .

*Straf.* To Pym? I would say nothing!  
I would not look upon Pym's face again!

*Car.* Stay . . . let me have to think I pressed your  
hand!

[*Exeunt STRAFFORD &c.*

(*Enter HAMPDEN and VANE.*)

## STRAFFORD

*Vane.* O Hampden, save that great misguided man!  
Plead Strafford's cause with Pym—I have remarked  
He moved no muscle when we all spoke loud  
Against him . . . you had but to breathe—he turned  
Those kind, large eyes upon you—kind to all  
But Strafford . . . whom I murder!

[*Enter PYM (conversing with the Solicitor-General ST. JOHN), the Managers of the Trial, FIENNES, RUDYARD, &c.*]

*Rud.* . . . . . Horrible!  
Till now all hearts were with you. . . . I withdraw  
For one! Too horrible! Oh we mistake  
Your purpose, Pym . . . you cannot snatch away  
The last spar from the drowning man!

*Fien.* . . . . . He talks  
With St. John of it—see how quietly!  
(*To other PRESBYTERIANS.*) You'll join us? Mind, we  
own he merits death—  
But this new course is monstrous! Vane, take heart!  
This Bill of his attainder shall not have  
One true man's hand to it.

*Vane.* . . . . . But hear me, Pym!  
Confront your Bill—your own Bill . . . what is it?  
You cannot catch the Earl on any charge . . .  
No man will say the Law has hold of him  
On any charge . . . and therefore you resolve  
To take the general sense on his desert,—  
As though no law existed, and we met  
To found one!—You refer to every man  
To speak his thoughts upon this hideous mass  
Of half-borne out assertions—dubious hints  
Hereafter to be cleared—distortions—aye,  
And wild inventions. Every man is saved  
The task of fixing any single charge  
On Strafford: he has but to see in him  
The Enemy of England . . .

*Pym.* . . . . . A right scruple!  
I have heard some called England's Enemy

## STRAFFORD

With less consideration.

*Vane.*

Pity me!

Me—brought so low—who hoped to do so much  
For England—her true Servant—Pym, your friend . . .  
Indeed you made me think I was your friend!  
But I have murdered Strafford . . . I have been  
The instrument of this! who shall remove  
That memory from me?

*Pym.*

I absolve you, Vane!

Take you no care for aught that you have done!

*Vane.* Dear Hampden, not this Bill! Reject this Bill!  
He staggers thro' the ordeal . . . let him go!  
Strew no fresh fire before him! Plead for us!  
With Pym . . . what God is he, to have no heart  
Like ours, yet make us love him?

*Rud.*

Hampden, plead

For us! When Strafford spoke your eyes were thick  
With tears . . . save him, dear Hampden!

*Hamp.*

England speaks

Louder than Strafford! Who are we, to play  
The generous pardoner at her expense—  
Magnanimously waive advantages—  
And if he conquer us . . . applaud his skill?

*Vane.* (To PYM.) He was your friend!

*Pym.*

I have heard that before.

*Fien.* But England trusts you . . .

*Hamp.*

Shame be his, who turns

The opportunity of serving her  
She trusts him with, to his own mean account—  
Who would look nobly frank at her expense!

*Fien.* I never thought it could have come to this!

*Pym* (turning from ST. JOHN). But I have made  
myself familiar, Fiennes,

With that one thought—have walked, and sat, and slept,  
That thought before me! I have done such things,  
Being the chosen man that should destroy  
This Strafford! You have taken up that thought  
To play with—for a gentle stimulant—  
To give a dignity to idler life  
By the dim prospect of this deed to come . . .

## STRAFFORD

But ever with the softening, sure belief,  
That all would come some strange way right at last!

*Fien.* Had we made out some weightier charge . . .

*Pym.* . . . . . You say

That these are petty charges! Can we come  
To the real charge at all? There he is safe!  
In tyranny's stronghold! Apostasy  
Is not a crime—Treachery not a crime!  
The cheek burns, the blood tingles, when you name  
Their names, but where's the power to take revenge  
Upon them? We must make occasion serve:  
The Oversight, pay for the Giant Sin  
That mocks us!

*Rud.* But this unexampled course—  
This Bill . . .

*Pym* By this, we roll the clouds away  
Of Precedent and Custom, and at once  
Bid the great light which God has set in all,  
The conscience of each bosom, shine upon  
The guilt of Strafford: each shall lay his hand  
Upon his breast, and say if this one man  
Deserve to die, or no, by those he sought  
First to undo.

*Fien.* You, Vane—you answer him!

*Vane.* Pym, you see farthest . . . I can only see  
Strafford . . . I'd not pass over that pale corse  
For all beyond!

*Rud. and others.* Pym, you would look so great!  
Forgive him! He would join us! now he finds  
How false the King has been! The pardon, too,  
Should be your own! Yourself should bear to Strafford  
The pardon of the Commons!

*Pym (starting).* Meet him? Strafford?  
Have we to meet once more, then? Be it so!  
And yet—the prophecy seemed half fulfilled  
When, at the trial, as he gazed—my youth—  
Our friendship—all old thoughts came back at once  
And left me, for a time . . .

*Vane. (aside to RUDYARD).* Moved, is he not?

*Pym.* To-morrow we discuss the points of law

## STRAFFORD

With Lane . . . . to-morrow!

*Vane.*

Time enough, dear Pym!

See, he relents! I knew he would relent!

*Pym.* The next day, Haselrig, *you* introduce,  
The Bill of his Attainder. (*After a pause.*) Pray for me!

SCENE III. *Whitehall.*

*The KING.*

*Cha.* Strafford, you are a Prince! Not to reward you  
—Nothing does that—but only for a whim!  
My noble servant!—To defend himself  
Thus irresistibly . . . withholding aught  
That seemed to implicate us!

We have done  
Less gallantly by Strafford! Well, the future  
Must recompense the past.

She tarries long!  
I understand you, Strafford, now!

The scheme—  
Carlisle's mad scheme—he'll sanction it, I fear,  
For love of me! 'Twas too precipitate:  
Before the Army's fairly on its march,  
He'll be at large: no matter . . .

Well, Carlisle?

(*Enter PYM.*)

*Pym.* Fear me not, Sire . . . my mission is to save,  
This time!

*Cha.* To break thus on me!—Unannounced . . .

*Pym.* It is of Strafford I would speak.

*Cha.* . . . . No more  
Of Strafford! I have heard too much from you!

*Pym.* I spoke, Sire, for the People: will you hear  
A word upon my own account?

*Cha.* . . . . Of Strafford?

(*Aside.*) So, turns the tide already? Have we tamed  
The insolent brawler?—Strafford's brave defence

## STRAFFORD

Is swift in its effect! (*To PYM.*) Lord Strafford, Sir,  
Has spoken for himself!

*Pym.* . . . . Sufficiently.

I would apprise you of the novel course  
The people take: the Trial fails, . . .

*Cha.* . . . . Yes—yes—

We are aware, Sir: for your part in it  
Means shall be found to thank you.

*Pym.* . . . . Pray you, read  
This schedule! (*as the KING reads it*) I would learn  
from your own mouth

—(It is a matter much concerning me)—

Whether, if two Estates of England shall concede  
The death of Strafford, on the grounds set forth  
Within that parchment, you, Sire, can resolve  
To grant your full consent to it. That Bill  
Is framed by me: if you determine, Sire,  
That England's manifested will shall guide  
Your judgment, ere another week that will  
Shall manifest itself. If not,—I cast  
Aside the measure.

*Cha.* . . . . You can hinder, then,  
The introduction of that Bill?

*Pym.* . . . . I can.

*Cha.* He is my friend, Sir: I have wronged him:  
mark you, . . .

Had I not wronged him—this might be!—You think  
Because you hate the Earl . . . (turn not away—  
We know you hate him)—no one else could love  
Strafford . . . but he has saved me—many times—  
Think what he has endured . . . proud too . . . you  
feel

What he endured!—And, do you know one strange,  
One frightful thing? We all have used that man  
As though he had been ours . . . with not a source  
Of happy thoughts except in us . . . and yet  
Strafford has children, and a home as well,  
Just as if we had never been! . . . Ah Sir,  
You are moved—you—a solitary man  
Wed to your cause—to England if you will!

## STRAFFORD

*Pym.* Yes . . . think, my soul . . . to England!  
Draw not back!

*Cha.* Prevent that Bill, Sir . . . Oh, your course  
Was fair till now! Why, in the end, 'tis I should sign  
The warrant for his death! You have said much  
That I shall ponder on; I never meant  
Strafford should serve me any more: I take  
The Commons' counsel: but this Bill is yours—  
Not worthy of its leader . . . care not, Sir,  
For that, however! I will quite forget  
You named it to me! You are satisfied?

*Pym.* Listen to me, Sire! Eliot laid his hand,  
Wasted and white, upon my forehead once;  
Wentworth . . . he's gone now; . . . has talked on,  
whole nights,  
And I beside him; Hampden loves me; Sire,  
How can I breathe and not wish England well—  
And her King well?

*Cha.* I thank you, Sir! You leave  
That King his servant! Thanks, Sir!

*Pym.* Let me speak  
—Who may not speak again! whose spirit yearns  
For a cool night after this weary day!  
—Who would not have my heart turn sicker yet  
In a new task, more fatal, more august,  
More full of England's utter weal or woe . . .  
I thought, Sire, could I find myself with you—  
After this Trial—alone—as man to man—  
I might say something—warn you—pray you—save  
you—

Mark me, King Charles, save—you!  
But God must do it. Yet I warn you, Sire—  
(With Strafford's faded eyes yet full on me)  
As you would have no deeper question moved  
—"How long the Many shall endure the One" . . .  
Assure me, Sire, if England shall assent  
To Strafford's death, you will not interfere!  
Or—

*Cha.* God forsakes me! I am in a net . . .  
I cannot move! Let all be as you say!



## STRAFFORD

(Enter CARLISLE.)

*Car.* He loves you—looking beautiful with joy  
Because you sent me! he would spare you all  
The pain! he never dreamed you would forsake  
Your servant in the evil day—nay, see  
Your scheme returned! That generous heart of his!  
He needs it not—or, needing it, disdains  
A course that might endanger you—you, Sire,  
Whom Strafford from his inmost soul . . .

(*Seeing Pym.*)

No fear—

No fear for Strafford! all that's true and brave  
On your own side shall help us! we are now  
Stronger than ever!

Ha—what, Sire, is this?

All is not well! What parchment have you there?

(*CHARLES drops it, and exit.*)

*Pym.* Sire, much is saved us both: farewell!

*Car.*

Stay—stay—

This cursed measure—you'll not dare—you mean  
To frighten Charles! This Bill—look—

(*As Pym reads it.*)

Why, your lip

Whitens—you could not read one line to me  
Your voice would falter so! It shakes you now—  
And will you dare . . .

*Pym.* . . . No recreant yet to her!

The great word went from England to my soul,  
And I arose! The end is very near! (*Exit.*)

*Car.* I save him! All have shrunk from him beside—  
'Tis only I am left! Heaven will make strong  
The hand as the true heart! Then let me die!

(*Exit.*)

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

# STRAFFORD

## ACT V.

### SCENE I. *Whitehall.*

#### HOLLIS, CARLISLE.

*Hol.* Tell the King, then! Come in with me!

*Car.* . . . . . Not so!

He must not hear, 'till it succeeds!

*Hol.* . . . . . Vain! Vain!

No dream was half so vain—you'll rescue Strafford  
And outwit Pym! I cannot tell you . . . girl,  
The block pursues me—all the hideous show . . .  
To-day . . . is it to-day? And all the while  
He's sure of the King's pardon . . . think I have  
To tell this man he is to die!

The King

May rend his hair, for me! I'll not see Strafford!

*Car.* Only, if I succeed, remember—Charles  
Has saved him! He would hardly value life  
Unless his gift.

My staunch friends wait! Go in—  
You must go in to Charles!

*Hol.* . . . . . And all beside  
Left Strafford long ago—the King has signed  
The warrant for his death . . . the Queen was sick  
Of the eternal subject! For the Court,—  
The Trial was amusing in its way  
Only too much of it . . . the Earl withdrew  
In time! But you—fragile—alone—so young!  
Amid rude mercenaries—you devised  
A plan to save him! Even tho' it fails  
What shall reward you?

*Car.* . . . . . I may go, you think,  
To France with him? And you reward me, friend!  
Who lived with Strafford even from his youth  
Before he set his heart on state-affairs  
And they bent down that noble brow of his—

# STRAFFORD

I have learned somewhat of his latter life  
And all the future I shall know—but, Hollis,  
I ought to make his youth my own as well!  
Tell me—when he is saved!

*Hol.* My gentle girl,  
He should know all—should love you—but 'tis vain!

*Car.* No—no—too late now! Let him love the King!  
'Tis the King's scheme! I have your word—re-  
member!—

We'll keep the old delusion up! But, hush!  
Hush! Each of us has work to do, beside!  
Go to the King! I hope—Hollis—I hope!  
Say nothing of my scheme! Hush, while we speak  
Think where He is! Now for my gallant friends!

(Exit.)

*Hol.* Where He is! Calling wildly upon Charles—  
Guessing his fate—pacing the prison floor . . .  
Let the King tell him! I'll not look on Strafford!

(*Exit.*)

SCENE II.—*The Tower*

STRAFFORD *sitting with his Children. They sing.*

*O bell' andare  
Per barca in mare,  
Verso la sera  
Di Primavera!*

*William.* (The boat's in the broad moonlight all this while)

*Verso la sera  
Di Primavera.*

And the boat shoots from underneath the moon  
Into the shadowy distance—only still  
You hear the dripping oar,

*Verso la sera . . .*

## STRAFFORD

And faint—and fainter—and then all's quite gone,  
Music and light and all, like a lost star.

*Anne.* But you should sleep, father: you were to sleep!

*Straf.* I do sleep, dearest; or if not—you know  
There's such a thing as . . .

*Wil.* You're too tired to sleep?

*Straf.* It will come by and bye and all day long,  
In that old quiet house I told you of:

We'll sleep safe there.

*Anne.* Why not in Ireland?

*Straf.* Ah!

Too many dreams!—That song's for Venice, William:  
You know how Venice looks upon the map . . .  
Isles that the mainland hardly can let go?

*Will.* You've been to Venice, father?

*Straf.* I was young then.

*Wil.* A city with no King; that's why I like  
Even a song that comes from Venice!

*Straf.* William!

*Wil.* Oh, I know why! Anne, do you love the King?  
But I'll see Venice for myself one day.

*Straf.* See many lands, boy—England last of all,—  
That way you'll love her best.

*Wil.* Why do men say

You sought to ruin her, then!

*Straf.* Ah . . . they say that.

*Wil.* Why?

*Straf.* I suppose they must have words to say,  
As you to sing.

*Anne.* But they make songs beside:  
Last night I heard one, in the street beneath,  
That named you . . . Oh, the names!

*Wil.* Don't mind her, father!

They soon left off when I called out to them!

*Straf.* We shall so soon be out of it, my boy!  
'Tis not worth while: who heeds a foolish song?

*Wil.* Why, not the King!

*Straf.* Well: it has been the fate  
Of better men, and yet . . . why not feel sure

## STRAFFORD

That Time, who in the twilight comes to mend  
All the fantastic Day's caprice—consign  
Unto the ground once more the ignoble term,  
And raise the Genius on his orb again—  
That Time will do me right?

*Anne.* (Shall we sing, William?  
He does not look thus when we sing.)

*Straf.* For Ireland,—  
Something is done . . . too little, but enough  
To show what might have been:—

*Wil.* (I have no heart  
To sing now! Anne, how very sad he looks!  
Oh I so hate the King for all he says!)

*Straf.* Forsook them! What, the common songs will  
run  
That I forsook the People? Nothing more?  
. . . Aye, Fame, the scribe, will pause awhile, no  
doubt,

Turning a deaf ear to her thousand slaves  
Noisy to be enrolled,—will register  
All curious glosses, subtle notices,  
Ingenious clearings-up one fain would see  
Beside that plain inscription of The Name—  
The Patriot Pym, or the Apostate Strafford!  
(*The children resume their song timidly, but break off.*)

*Enter HOLLIS and an Attendant.*

*Straf.* No . . . Hollis? in good time!—Who is he?

*Hol.* One  
That must be present.

*Straf.* Ah—I understand—  
They will not let me see poor Laud alone!  
How politic! They'd use me by degrees  
To solitude: and just as you came in  
I was solicitous what life to lead  
When Strafford's "not so much as Constable  
"In the King's service." Is there any means  
To keep one's self awake? What would you do  
After this bustle, Hollis, in my place?

## STRAFFORD

*Hol.* Strafford . . .

*Straf.* Observe, not but that Pym and you  
Will find me news enough—news I shall hear  
Under a quince tree by a fish-pond side  
At Wentworth. Or, a better project now—  
What if when all is over, and the Saints  
Reign, and the Senate goes on swimmingly,—  
What if I venture up, some day, unseen—  
To saunter through the Town—notice how Pym,  
The Tribune, likes Whitehall—drop quietly  
Into a tavern—hear a point discussed—  
As, whether Strafford's name were John or Richard—  
And be myself appealed to . . . I, who shall  
Myself have near forgotten!

*Hol.* I would speak . . .

*Straf.* Then you shall speak,—not now : I want, just  
now,  
To hear the sound of my own tongue. This place  
Is full of ghosts!

*Hol.* Will you not hear me, Strafford?

*Straf.* Oh, readily! . . . Only, one droll thing more,—  
The minister! Who will advise the King,  
And yet have health—children, for aught I know!  
—My patient pair of traitors! Ah . . . but, William—  
Does not his cheek grow thin?

*Wil.* 'Tis you look thin,  
Father!

*Straf.* A scamper o'er the breezy wolds  
Sets all to-rights!

*Hol.* You cannot sure forget  
A prison-roof is o'er you, Strafford?

*Straf.* No,  
Why, no. I would not touch on that, the first.  
I left you that. Well, Hollis?

. . . Say at once  
The King could find no time to set me free!  
A mask at Theobald's?

*Hol.* Hush . . . no such affair  
Detains him.

*Straf.* True : what needs so great a matter?

## STRAFFORD

The Queen's lip may be sore!— Well : when he pleases,—  
Only, I want the air : it vexes one  
To be pent up so long!

*Hol.* The King . . . I bear  
His message, Strafford . . . pray you, let me speak!

*Straf.* Go, William! Anne, try o'er your song again!  
(*The children retire.*)

They shall be loyal, friend, at all events.  
I know your message : you have nothing new  
To tell me : from the first I guessed as much.  
I know, instead of coming here at once—  
Leading me forth before them by the hand,—  
I know the King will leave the door ajar  
As though I were escaping . . . let me fly  
While the mob gapes upon some show prepared  
On the other side of the river!

*Hol.* (*to his Companion.*) Tell him all;  
I knew my throat would thicken thus . . . Speak,  
you!

*Straf.* 'Tis all one—I forgive him. Let me have  
The order of release!

. . . I've heard, as well,  
Of certain poor manœuvrings to avoid  
The granting pardon at his proper risk;  
First, he must prattle somewhat to the Lords—  
Must talk a trifle with the Commons first—  
Be grieved I should abuse his confidence,  
And far from blaming them, and . . .

. . . Where's the order?

*Hol.* Spare me!

*Straf.* Why . . . he'd not have me steal away?  
—With an old doublet and a steeple hat  
Like Prynne's? Be smuggled into France, perhaps?  
Hollis, 'tis for my children! 'Twas for them  
I e'er consented to stand day by day  
And give those Puritans the best of words—  
Be patient—speak when called upon—observe  
Their rules,—and not give all of them the lie!

*Hol.* No—Strafford . . . no escape . . . no . . .  
dearest Strafford!

## STRAFFORD

*Straf.* What's in that boy of mine that he should be  
Son to a prison-breaker? I shall stay  
And he'll stay with me. Charles should know as  
much—

He too has children!

(*Turning to HOLLIS's companion.*) Ah, you feel for  
me!

No need to hide that face! Though it have looked  
Upon me from the judgment-seat . . . I know  
Strangely, that somewhere it has looked on me . . .  
Still there is One who does not come—there's One  
That shut out Heaven from me . . .

*Hol.* Think on it then!  
On Heaven . . . and calmly . . . as one . . . as one  
to die!

*Straf.* Die? True, friend, all must die, and all must  
need

Forgiveness: I forgive him from my soul.

*Hol.* Be constant, now . . . be grand and brave . . .  
be now

Just as when . . . Oh, I cannot stay for words . . .  
'Tis a world's wonder . . . but . . . but . . . you must  
die!

*Straf.* Sir, if your errand is to set me free  
This heartless jest will . . .

*Hollis*—you turn white,  
And your lip shivers!—What if . . .

Oh, we'll end,  
We'll end this! See this paper—warm . . . feel . . .  
warm

With lying next my heart! Whose hand is there?  
Whose promise? Read! Read loud! For God to  
hear!

"Strafford shall take no hurt" . . . read it, I say!

"In person, honour, nor estate." . . .

*Hol.* The King . . .

*Straf.* I could unking him by a breath! You sit  
Where Loudon sate . . . Loudon, who came to tell  
The certain end, and offer me Pym's pardon  
If I'd forsake the King—and I stood firm



## STRAFFORD

On my King's faith! The King who lived . . .

*Hol.*

To sign

The warrant for your death.

*Straf.*

"Put not your trust

"In Princes, neither in the sons of men,

"In whom is no salvation!" On that King—

Upon his head . . .

*Cha.* O Hollis, he will curse me!

*Hol.* The scaffold is prepared—they wait for you—

He has consented . . .

*Cha.*

No, no—stay first—Strafford!

You would not see me perish at your foot . . .

It was wrung from me! Only curse me not!

The Queen had cruel eyes! And Vane declared . . .

And I believed I could have rescued you . . .

Strafford—they threaten me! and . . . well, speak

now,

And let me die!—

*Hol.* (To STRAFFORD.) As you hope grace from God,  
Be merciful to this most wretched man!

VOICES FROM WITHIN.

*Verso la sera*

*Di Primavera.*

*Straf.* (After a pause.) You'll be good to those  
children, Sire? I know

You'll not believe her even should the Queen

Think they take after one they never saw!

I had intended that my son should live

A stranger to these matters . . . but you are

So utterly deprived of friends! He too

Must serve you—will you not be good to him?

Stay—Sire—stay—do not promise—do not swear!

And, Hollis—do the best you can for me!

I've not a soul to trust to: Wandesford's dead—

And you've got Radcliffe safe—and Laud is here . . .

I've had small time of late for my affairs—

But I'll trust any of you . . . Pym himself—

No one could hurt them: there's an infant, too—

## STRAFFORD

. . . These tedious cares! Your Majesty could spare them—

But 'tis so awkward—dying in a hurry!

. . . Nay—Pardon me, my King! I had forgotten

Your education, trials, and temptations

And weakness . . . I have said a peevish word—

But, mind I bless you at the last! You know

'Tis between you and me . . . What has the world  
To do with it? Farewell!

*Cha. (at the door.)* Balfour! Balfour!

. . . What, die? Strafford to die? This Strafford  
here?

Balfour! . . . Nay Strafford, do not speak . . . Balfour!

*Enter BALFOUR.*

The Parliament . . . go to them—I grant all

Demands! Their sittings shall be permanent—

Tell them to keep their money if they will . . .

I'll come to them for every coat I wear

And every crust I eat, only I choose

To pardon Strafford—Strafford—my brave friend!

*Bal. (aside.)* Is he mad, Hollis?

*Cha.* Strafford, now, to die!

. . . But the Queen . . . ah, the Queen!—make haste,  
Balfour!

—You never heard the people howl for blood,  
Beside!

*Bal.* Your Majesty may hear them now:

The walls can hardly keep their murmurs out:

Please you retire!

*Cha.* Take all the troops, Balfour!

*Bal.* There are some hundred thousand of the crowd.

*Cha.* Come with me, Strafford! You'll not fear  
them friend!

*Straf.* Balfour, say nothing to the world of this!

I charge you, as a dying man, forget

You gazed upon this agony of one . . .

Of one . . . or if . . . why you may say, Balfour,

The King was sorry—very—'tis no shame!

## STRAFFORD

Yes, you may say he even wept, Balfour,—  
And that I walked the lighter to the block  
Because of it. I shall walk lightly, Sire!  
—For I shall save you . . . save you at the last!  
Earth fades, Heaven dawns on me . . . I shall wake  
next

Before God's throne: the moment's close at hand  
When Man the first, last time, has leave to lay  
His whole heart bare before its maker—leave  
To clear up the long error of a life  
And choose one happiness for evermore.  
With all mortality about me, Charles,  
The sudden wreck—the dregs—the violent death . .  
I'll pray for you! Thro' all the Angel-song  
Shall penetrate one weak and quivering prayer—  
I'll say how good you are . . . inwardly good  
And pure . . . (*The KING falls: HOLLIS raises him.*)

Be witness, he could not prevent  
My death! I'll go—ere he awakes—go now!  
All must be ready—did you say, Balfour,  
The crowd began to murmur?—They'll be kept  
Too late for sermon at St. Antholin's!  
Now—but tread softly—children are at play  
In the next room—Ah, just my children—Hollis!  
—Or . . . no—support the King! (*a door is unbarred.*)  
Hark . . . they are here!  
Stay Hollis!—Go Balfour! I'll follow . . .

CARLISLE (*entering with many Attendants*).

Car. . . . . Me!  
Follow me, Strafford, and be saved! . . . The King?  
(*To the KING.*) Well—as you ordered . . . They are  
ranged without . . .  
The convoy . . . (*seeing the KING's state.*)  
(*To STRAFFORD.*) You know all then! Why, I thought  
It looked so well that Charles should save you—Charles  
Alone . . . 'tis shame that you should owe it me—  
Me . . . no, not shame! Strafford, you'll not feel  
shame

## STRAFFORD

At being saved by me?

*Hol.* All true! Oh Strafford,  
She saves you! all her deed . . . this girl's own deed  
—And is the boat in readiness? . . . You, friend,  
Are Billingsley, no doubt! Speak to her, Strafford!  
See how she trembles . . . waiting for your voice!  
The world's to learn its bravest story yet!

*Car.* Talk afterward! Long nights in France enough  
To sit beneath the vines and talk of home!

*Straf.* You love me, girl! Ah, Strafford can be  
loved

As well as Vane! I could escape, then?

*Car.* Haste . . .  
Advance the torches, Bryan!

*Straf.* I will die!  
They call me proud . . . but England had no right  
When she encountered me—her strength to mine—  
To find the chosen foe a craven! Girl,  
I fought her to the utterance—I fell—  
I am hers now . . . and I will die! Beside  
The lookers-on! Eliot is all about  
This place with his most uncomplaining brow!

*Car.* Strafford!

*Straf.* I think if you could know how much  
I love you, you would be repaid, my girl!

*Car.* Then, for my sake!

*Straf.* Even for your sweet sake . . .  
I stay.

*Hol.* For *their* sake!

*Straf.* I bequeath a stain .  
Leave me! Girl, humour me and let me die!

*Hol.* No way to draw him hence—Carlisle—no way?

*Car.* (*suddenly to CHARLES.*) Bid him escape . . .  
wake, King! Bid him escape!

*Straf.* (*Looks earnestly at him.*) Yes, I will go! Die,  
and forsake the King?

I'll not draw back from the last service.

*Car.* Strafford!

*Straf.* And, after all, what is disgrace to me?  
Let us come, girl! . . . That it should end this way!

## STRAFFORD

Lead then . . . but I feel strangely . . . it was not  
To end this way!

*Car.* Lean—lean on me!

*Straf.* My King!

Oh, had he trusted me—his Friend of friends—

Had he but trusted me!

*Car.* Leave not the king—

I can support him, Hollis!

*Straf.* (*Starting as they approach the door at the back.*)

Not this way;

This gate . . . I deamed of it . . . this very gate!

*Car.* It opens on the river—our good boat  
Is moored below—our friends are there!

*Straf.* The same!

Only with something ominous and dark,

Fatal, inevitable . . .

*Cha.* Strafford! Strafford!

*Straf.* Not by this gate . . . I feel it will be there.  
I dreamed of it I tell you . . . touch it not!

*Car.* To save the King,—Strafford, to save the King!

(*As STRAFFORD opens the door, PYM is discovered with HAMPDEN, VANE, &c. STRAFFORD falls back to the front of the stage: PYM follows slowly and confronts him.*)

*Pym.* Have I done well? Speak, England! Whose  
great sake

I still have laboured for, with disregard  
To my own heart,—for whom my youth was made  
Barren, my future dark, to offer up  
Her sacrifice—this man, this Wentworth here—  
That walked in youth with me—loved me it may be,  
And whom, for his forsaking England's cause,  
I hunted by all means (trusting that she  
Would sanctify all means) even to the grave  
That yawns for him. And saying this, I feel  
No bitter pang than first I felt, the hour  
I swore that Wentworth might leave us,—but I  
Would never leave him: I do leave him now!

## STRAFFORD

I render up my charge (be witness, God !)  
To England who imposed it! I have done  
Her bidding—poorly, wrongly,—it may be  
With ill effects—for I am but a man . .  
Still, I have done my best, my very best,  
Not faltering for a moment! I have done !

*(After a pause.)*

And that said, I will say . . . yes, I will say  
I never loved but this man— David not  
More Jonathan! Even thus, I love him now:  
And look for my chief portion in that world  
Where great hearts led astray are turned again,  
(Soon it may be . . . and . . . yes . . . it will be soon :  
My mission over, I shall not live long! )—  
. . . Aye here I know I talk—and I will talk  
Of England—and her great reward—as all  
I look for there ; but in my inmost heart  
Believe I think of stealing quite away  
To walk once more with Wentworth—with my friend  
Purged from all error, gloriously renewed,  
And Eliot shall not blame us! Then indeed . . .  
(This is no meeting, Wentworth! Tears rise up  
Too hot . . . A thin mist—is it blood?—enwraps  
The face I loved so!) Then, shall the meeting be!  
Then—then—then—I may kiss that hand, I know!

*Straf. (Walks calmly up to Pym and offers his hand.)*

I have loved England too; we'll meet then, Pym!  
As well to die! Youth is the time—our youth,  
To think and to decide on a great course:  
Age with its action follows; but 'tis dreary  
To have to alter one's whole life in age—  
The time past, the strength gone! as well die now.  
When we meet, Pym, I'd be set right—not now!  
I'd die as I have lived . . . too late to change!  
Best die. Then if there's any fault, it will  
Be smothered up: much best! You'll be too busy  
With your hereafter, you will have achieved  
Too many triumphs to be always dwelling  
Upon my downfall, Pym? Poor little Laud  
May dream his dream out of a perfect Church

## STRAFFORD

In some blind corner? And there's no one left . . .

*(He glances on the KING.)*

I trust the King now wholly to you, Pym!

And yet . . . I know not! what if with this weakness . . .

And I shall not be there . . . And he'll betray

His friends—if he has any . . . And he's false . . .

And loves the Queen, and . . .

Oh, my fate is nothing—

Nothing! But not that awful head . . . not that!

Pym, save the King! Pym, save him! Stay—you shall . . .

For you love England! I, that am dying, think

What I must see . . . 'tis here . . . all here! My God!

Let me but gasp out, in one word of fire,

How Thou wilt plague him, satiating Hell!

What? England that you love—our land—become

A green and putrefying charnel, left

Our children . . . some of us have children, Pym—

Some who, without that, still must ever wear

A darkened brow, an over-serious look,

And never properly be young . . .

No word!

You will not say a word—to me—to Him!

*(Turning to CHARLES.)*

Speak to him . . . as you spoke to me . . . that day!

Nay, I will let you pray to him, my King—

Pray to him! He will kiss your feet, I know!

What if I curse you? Send a strong Curse forth

Clothed from my heart, lapped round with horror, till

She's fit, with her white face, to walk the world

Scaring kind natures from your cause and you—

Then sit down with you, at the board-head,

The gathering for prayer . . .

*Vane.*

O speak, Pym! Speak!

*Straf.* . . . Creep up, and quietly follow each one home—

You—you—you—be a nestling Care for each

To sleep with, hardly moaning in his dreams . . .

## STRAFFORD

She gnaws so quietly . . . until he starts—

Gets off with half a heart eaten away . . .

Oh you shall 'scape with less, if she's my child!

*Vane.* (to PYM.) We never thought of this . . . surely  
not dreamed

Of this . . . it never can . . . could come to this!

*Pym.* (after a pause). If England should declare her  
will to me . . .

*Straf.* No—not for England, now—not for Heaven,  
now . . .

See, Pym—for me! My sake! I kneel to you!

There . . . I will thank you for the death . . . my  
friend,

*This* is the meeting . . . you will send me proud

To my chill grave! Dear Pym—I'll love you well!

Save him for me, and let me love you well!

*Pym.* England—I am thine own! Dost thou exact  
That service? I obey thee to the end!

*Straf.* (as he totters out). O God, I shall die first—I  
shall die first!

(*Curtain falls.*)

THE END



**SORDELLO**



# SORDELLO

## BOOK THE FIRST

Who will, may hear Sordello's story told:  
His story? Who believes me shall behold  
The man, pursue his fortunes to the end  
Like me; for as the friendless people's friend  
Spied from his hill-top once, despite the din  
And dust of multitudes, Pentapolin  
Named o' the Naked Arm, I single out  
Sordello, compassed murkily about  
With ravage of six long sad hundred years:  
Only believe me. Ye believe?

Appears

Verona . . . Never, I should warn you first,  
Of my own choice had this, if not the worst  
Yet not the best expedient, served to tell  
A story I could body forth so well  
By making speak, myself kept out of view,  
The very man as he was wont to do,  
And leaving you to say the rest for him:  
Since, though I might be proud to see the dim  
Abysmal Past divide its hateful surge,  
Letting of all men this one man emerge  
Because it pleased me, yet, that moment past,  
I should delight in watching first to last  
His progress as you watch it, not a whit  
More in the secret than yourselves who sit  
Fresh-chapleted to listen: but it seems  
Your setters-forth of unexampled themes,  
Makers of quite new men, producing them  
Had best chalk broadly on each vesture's hem

## SORDELLO

The wearer's quality, or take his stand  
Motley on back and pointing-pole in hand  
Beside them; so for once I face ye, friends,  
Summoned together from the world's four ends,  
Dropped down from Heaven or cast up from Hell,  
To hear the story I propose to tell.  
Confess now, poets know the dragnet's trick,  
Catching the dead if Fate denies the quick  
And shaming her; 'tis not for Fate to choose  
Silence or song because she can refuse  
Real eyes to glisten more, real hearts to ache  
Less oft, real brows turn smoother for our sake:  
I have experienced something of her spite;  
But there's a realm wherein she has no right  
And I have many lovers: say but few  
Friends Fate accords me? Here they are; now view  
The host I muster! Many a lighted face  
Foul with no vestige of the grave's disgrace;  
What else should tempt them back to taste our air  
Except to see how their successors fare?  
My audience: and they sit, each ghostly man  
Striving to look as living as he can,  
Brother by breathing brother; thou art set,  
Clear-witted critic, by . . . but I'll not fret  
A wondrous soul of them, nor move Death's spleen  
Who loves not to unlock them. Friends! I mean  
The living in good earnest—ye elect  
Chiefly for love—suppose not I reject  
Judicious praise, who contrary shall peep  
Some fit occasion forth, for fear ye sleep,  
To glean your bland approvals. Then, appear,  
Verona! stay—thou, spirit, come not near  
Now—nor this time desert thy cloudy place  
To scare me, thus employed, with that pure face!  
I need not fear this audience, I make free  
With them, but then this is no place for thee!  
The thunder-phrase of the Athenian, grown  
Up out of memories of Marathon,  
Would echo like his own sword's griding screech  
Braying a Persian shield,—the silver speech

## SORDELLO

Of Sidney's self, the starry paladin,  
Turn intense as a trumpet sounding in  
The knights to tilt—wert thou to hear! What heart  
Have I to play my puppets, bear my part  
Before these worthies?

Lo, the Past is hurled  
In twain: upthrust, out-staggering on the world,  
Subsiding into shape, a darkness rears  
Its outline, kindles at the core, appears  
Verona. 'Tis six hundred years and more  
Since an event. The Second Friedrich wore  
The purple, and the Third Honorius filled  
The holy chair. That autumn eve was stilled:  
At last remains of sunset dimly burned  
O'er the far forests like a torch-flame turned  
By the wind back upon it's bearer's hand  
In one long flare of crimson; as a brand  
The woods beneath lay black. A single eye  
From all Verona cared for the soft sky:  
But, gathering in its ancient market-place,  
Talked group with restless group; and not a face  
But wrath made livid, for among them were  
Death's staunch purveyors, such as have in care  
To feast him. Fear had long since taken root  
In every breast, and now these crushed its fruit,  
The ripe hate, like a wine: to note the way  
It worked while each grew drunk! men grave and  
grey

Stood, with shut eyelids, rocking to and fro,  
Letting the silent luxury trickle slow  
About the hollows where a heart should be;  
But the young gulped with a delirious glee  
Some foretaste of their first debauch in blood  
At the fierce news: for, be it understood,  
Envoys apprised Verona that her prince  
Count Richard of Saint Boniface, joined since  
A year with Azzo, Este's Lord, to thrust  
Taurello Salinguerra, prime in trust  
With Ecelin Romano, from his seat  
Ferrara,—over zealous in the feat

## SORDELLO

And stumbling on a peril unaware,  
Was captive, "tramed in his proper snare,"  
They phrase it, "taken by his own intrigue:"  
Immediate succour, from the Lombard League  
Of fifteen cities that affect the Pope,  
For Azzo therefore and his fellow—hope  
Of the Guelf cause, a glory overcast!  
Men's faces, late agape, are now aghast:  
Prone is the purple pavice; Este makes  
Mirth for the Devil when he undertakes  
To pay the Ecelin; as if it cost  
Merely your pushing-by to gain a post  
Like his! The patron tells ye, once for all,  
There be sound reasons that preferment fall  
On our beloved . . .

Duke o' the Rood, why not?

Shouted an Estian, grudge ye such a lot?  
The hill-cat boasts some cunning of her own,  
Some stealthy trick to better beasts unknown  
That quick with prey enough her hunger blunts  
And feeds her fat while gaunt the lion hunts.  
Taurello, quoth an envoy, as in wane  
Dwelt at Ferrara. Like an osprey fain  
To fly but forced the earth his couch to make  
Far inland till his friend the tempest wake,  
Wait he the Kaiser's coming; and as yet  
That fast friend sleeps, and he too sleeps; but let  
Only the billow freshen, and he snuffs  
The aroused hurricane ere it enroughs  
The sea it means to cross because of him:  
Sinketh the breeze? His hope-sick eye grows dim;  
Creep closer on the creature! Every day  
Strengthens the Pontiff; Ecelin, they say,  
Dozes at Oliero, with dry lips  
Telling upon his perished finger-tips  
How many ancestors are to depose  
Ere he be Satan's Viceroy when the doze  
Deposits him in hell; so Guelfs rebuilt  
Their houses; not a drop of blood was spilt  
When Cino Bocchimpane chanced to meet

## SORDELLO

Buccio Virtù; God's wafer, and the street  
Is narrow! Tutti Santi, think, a-swarm  
With Ghibellins, and yet he took no harm.  
This could not last. Off Salinguerra went  
To Padua, Podestà, with pure intent,  
Said he, my presence, judged the single bar  
To permanent tranquillity, may jar  
No longer—so! his back is fairly turned?  
The pair of goodly palaces are burned,  
The gardens ravaged, and your Guelf is drunk  
A week with joy; the next, his laughter sunk  
In sob's of blood, for he found, some strange way,  
Old Salinguerra back again; I say,  
Old Salinguerra in the town once more  
Uprooting, overturning, flame before  
Blood fetlock-high beneath him; Azzo fled;  
Who scaped the carnage followed; then the dead  
Were pushed aside from Salinguerra's throne,  
He ruled once more Ferrara, all alone,  
Till Azzo, stunned awhile, revived, would pounce  
Coupled with Boniface, like lynx and ounce,  
On the gorged bird. The burghers ground their teeth  
To see troop after troop encamp beneath  
I' the standing corn thick o'er the scanty patch  
It took so many patient months to snatch  
Out of the marsh; while just within their walls  
Men fed on men. Astute Taurello calls  
A parley: let the Count wind up the war!  
Richard, light-hearted as a plunging star,  
Agrees to enter for the kindest ends  
Ferrara, flanked with fifty chosen friends,  
No horse-boy more for fear your timid sort  
Should fly Ferrara at the bare report.  
Quietly through the town they rode, jog-jog;  
Ten, twenty, thirty . . . curse the catalogue  
Of burnt Guelf houses! Strange Taurello shows  
Not the least sign of life—whereat arose  
A general growl: How? With his victors by?  
I and my Veronese? My troops and I?  
Receive us, was your word? so jogged they on,

## SORDELLO

Nor laughed their host too openly: once gone  
Into the trap : . .

Six hundred years ago!  
Such the time's aspect and peculiar woe  
(Yourselves may spell it yet in chronicles,  
Albeit the worm, our busy brother, drills  
His sprawling path through letters anciently  
Made fine and large to suit some abbot's eye)  
When the new Hohenstauffen dropped the mask,  
Flung John of Brienne's favour from his casque,  
Forsook crusading, had no mind to leave  
Saint Peter's proxy leisure to retrieve  
Losses to Otho and to Barbaross,  
Or make the Alps less easy to recross;  
And thus confirming Pope Honorius' fear,  
Was excommunicate that very year.  
The triple-bearded Teuton come to life!  
Groaned the Great League; and, arming for the  
    strife,  
Wide Lombardy, on tiptoe to begin,  
Took up, as it was Guelf or Ghibellin,  
Its cry; what cry?

The Emperor to come!  
His crowd of feudatories, all and some  
That leapt down with a crash of swords, spears,  
    shields,  
One fighter on his fellow, to our fields,  
Scattered anon, took station here and there,  
And carried it, till now, with little care—  
Cannot but cry for him; how else rebut  
Us longer? Cliffs an earthquake suffered jut  
In the mid-sea, each domineering crest  
Nothing save such another throe can wrest  
From out (conceive) a certain chokeweed grown  
Since o'er the waters, twine and tangle thrown  
Too thick, too fast accumulating round,  
Too sure to over-riot and confound  
Ere long each brilliant islet with itself  
Unless a second shock save shoal and shelf,  
Whirling the sea-drift wide: alas, the bruised



## SORDELLO

And sullen wreck! Sunlight to be diffused  
For that! Sunlight, 'neath which, a scum at first,  
The million fibres of our chokeweed nurst  
Dispread themselves, mantling the troubled main,  
And, shattered by those rocks, took hold again  
So kindly blazed it—that same blaze to brood  
O'er every cluster of the multitude  
Still hazarding new clasps, ties, filaments,  
An emulous exchange of pulses, vents  
Of nature into nature; till some growth  
Unfancied yet exuberantly clothe  
A surface solid now, continuous, one:  
The Pope, for us the People, who begun  
The People, carries on the People thus,  
To keep that Kaiser off and dwell with us!  
See you?

Or say, Two Principles that live  
Each fitly by its Representative:  
Hill-cat . . . who called him so, our gracefulest  
Adventurer? the ambiguous stranger-guest  
Of Lombardy (sleek but that ruffling fur,  
Those talons to their sheath!) whose velvet purr  
Soothes jealous neighbours when a Saxon scout  
. . . Arpo or Yoland, is it? one without  
A country or a name, presumes to couch  
Beside their noblest; until men avouch  
That of all Houses in the Trivisan  
Conrad describes no fitter, rear or van,  
Than Ecelo! They laughed as they enrolled  
That name at Milan on the page of gold  
For Godego, Ramon, Marostica,  
Cartiglion, Bassano, Loria,  
And every sheep-cote on the Suabian's fief!  
No laughter when his son, the Lombard Chief  
Forsooth, as Barbarossa's path was bent  
To Italy along the Vale of Trent,  
Welcomed him at Roncaglia! Sadness now--  
The hamlets nested on the Tyrol's brow,  
The Asolan and Euganean hills,  
The Rhetian and the Julian, sadness fills

## SORDELLO

Them all that Ecelin vouchsafes to stay  
Among and care about them ; day by day  
Choosing this pinnacle, the other spot,  
A castle building to defend a cot,  
A cot built for the castle to defend,  
Nothing but castles, castles, nor an end  
To boasts how mountain ridge may join with ridge  
By sunken gallery and soaring bridge—  
He takes, in brief, a figure that beseems  
The griesliest nightmare of the Church's dreams,  
A Signory firm-rooted, unestranged  
From its old interests, and nowise changed  
By its new neighbourhood ; perchance the vaunt  
Of Otho, "my own Este shall supplant  
Your Este," come to pass. The sire led in  
A son as cruel ; and this Ecelin  
Had sons, in turn, and daughters sly and tall,  
And curling and compliant ; but for all  
Romano (so they style him) thrives ; that neck  
Of his so pinched and white, that hungry cheek  
Prove 'tis some fiend, not him, men's flesh is meant  
To feed : whereas Romano's instrument,  
Famous Taurello Salinguerra, sole  
I' the world, a tree whose boughs are slipt the bole  
Successively, why should not he shed blood  
To further a design ? Men understood  
Living was pleasant to him as he wore  
His careless surcoat, glanced some missive o'er,  
Propped on his truncheon in the public way.  
Ecelin lifts two writhen hands to pray  
At Oliero's convent now : so, place  
For Azzo, Lion of the . . . why disgrace  
A worthiness conspicuous near and far  
(Atti at Rome while free and consular,  
Este at Padua to repulse the Hun)  
By trumpeting the Church's princely son  
Styled Patron of Rovigo's Polesine,  
Ancona's March, Ferrara's . . . ask, in fine,  
Your chronicles, commenced when some old  
Found it intolerable to be sunk

## SORDELLO

(Vexed to the quick by his revolting cell)  
Quite out of summer while alive and well:  
Ended when by his mat the Prior stood,  
Mid busy promptings of the brotherhood,  
Striving to coax from his decrepit brains  
The reason Father Porphyry took pains  
To blot those ten lines out which used to stand  
First on their charter drawn by Hildebrand.

The same night wears. Verona's rule of yore  
Was vested in a certain Twenty-four;  
And while within his palace these debate  
Concerning Richard and Ferrara's fate,  
Glide we by clapping doors, with sudden glare  
Of cressets vented on the dark, nor care  
For aught that's seen or heard until we shut  
The smother in, the lights, all noises but  
The carroch's booming; safe at last! Why strange  
Such a recess should lurk behind a range  
Of banquet-rooms? Your finger—thus—you push  
A spring, and the wall opens, would you rush  
Upon the banqueters, select your prey,  
Waiting the slaughter-weapons in the way  
Strewing this very bench; with sharpened ear  
A preconcerted signal to appear;  
Or if you simply crouch with beating heart  
Bearing in some voluptuous pageant part  
To startle them. Nor mutes nor masquers now;  
Nor any . . . does that one man sleep whose brow  
The dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er?  
What woman stood beside him? not the more  
Is he unfastened from the earnest eyes  
Because that arras fell between! Her wise  
And lulling words are yet about the room,  
Her presence wholly poured upon the gloom  
Down even to her vesture's creeping stir:  
And so reclines he, saturate with her,  
Until an outcry from the square beneath  
Pierces the charm: he springs up, glad to breathe  
Above the cunning element, and shakes  
The stupor off as (look you) morning breaks

## SORDELLO

On the gay dress, and, near concealed by it,  
The lean frame like a half-burnt taper, lit  
Erst at some marriage-feast, then laid away  
Till the Armenian bridegroom's dying-day,  
In his wool wedding-robe; for he—for he—  
"Gate-vein of this hearts' blood of Lombardy"  
(If I should falter now)—for he is Thine!  
Sordello, thy forerunner, Florentine!  
A herald-star I know thou didst absorb  
Relentless into the consummate orb  
That scared it from its right to roll along  
A sempiternal path with dance and song  
Fulfilling its allotted period  
Serenest of the progeny of God  
Who yet resigns it not; his darling stoops  
With no quenched lights, desponds with no blank  
troops

Of disenfranchised brilliances, for, blent  
Utterly with thee, its shy element  
Like thine upburneth prosperous and clear:  
Still, what if I approach the august sphere  
Named now with only one name, disentwine  
That under current soft and argentine  
From its fierce mate in the majestic mass  
Leavened as the sea whose fire was mixt with glass  
In John's transcendent vision, launch once more  
That lustre? Dante, pacer of the shore  
Where gluttoned Hell disgorgeth filthiest gloom,  
Unbitten by its whirring sulphur-spume—  
Or whence the grieved and obscure waters slope  
Into a darkness quieted by hope—  
Plucker of amaranths grown beneath God's eye  
In gracious twilights where his Chosen lie,  
I would do this! If I should falter now—

In Mantua-territory half is slough  
Half pine-tree forest; maples, scarlet-oaks  
Breed o'er the river-beds; even Mincio chokes  
With sand the summer through; but 'tis morass  
In winter up to Mantua walls. There was  
(Some thirty years before this evening's coil)

## SORDELLO

One spot reclaimed from the surrounding spoil,  
Goito; just a castle built amid  
A few low mountains; firs and larches hid  
Their main defiles and rings of vineyard bound  
The rest: some captured creature in a pound,  
Whose artless wonder quite precludes distress  
Secure beside in its own loveliness,  
So peered with airy head, below, above,  
The castle at its toils the lapwings love  
To glean among at grape-time. Pass within:  
A maze of corridors contrived for sin,  
Dusk winding-stairs, dim galleries got past,  
You gain the inmost chambers, gain at last  
A maple-panelled room: that haze which seems  
Floating about the panel, if there gleams  
A sunbeam over it will turn to gold  
And in light-graven characters unfold  
The Arab's wisdom everywhere; what shade  
Marred them a moment, those slim pillars made,  
Cut like a company of palms to prop  
The roof, each kissing top entwined with top,  
Leaning together; in the carver's mind  
Some knot of bacchanals, flushed cheek combined  
With straining forehead, shoulders purpled, hair  
Diffused between, who in a goat-skin bear  
A vintage; graceful sister-palms: but quick  
To the main wonder now. A vault, see; thick  
Black shade about the ceiling, though fine slits  
Across the buttress suffer light by fits  
Upon a marvel in the midst: nay, stoop—  
A dullish grey-streaked cumbrous font, a group  
Round it, each side of it, where'er one sees,  
Upholds it—shrinking Caryatides  
Of just-tinged marble like Eve's liliated flesh  
Beneath her Maker's finger when the fresh  
First pulse of life shot brightening the snow:  
The font's edge burthens every shoulder, so  
They muse upon the ground, eyelids half closed,  
Some, with meek arms behind their backs disposed,  
Some, crossed above their bosoms, some, to veil

## SORDELLO

Their eyes, some, propping chin and cheek so pale,  
Some, hanging slack an utter helpless length  
Dead as a buried vestal whose whole strength  
Goes when the grate above shuts heavily;  
So dwell these noiseless girls, patient to see,  
Like priestesses because of sin impure  
Penanced for ever, who resigned endure,  
Having that once drunk sweetness to the dregs;  
And every eve Sordello's visit begs  
Pardon for them : constant as eve he came  
To sit beside each in her turn, the same  
As one of them, a certain space : and awe  
Made a great indistinctness till he saw  
Sunset slant cheerful through the buttress chinks,  
Gold seven times globed ; surely our maiden shrinks  
And a smile stirs her as if one faint grain  
Her load were lightened, one shade less the stain  
Obscured her forehead, yet one more bead slipt  
From off the rosary whereby the crypt  
Keeps count of the contritions of its charge?  
Then with a step more light, a heart more large,  
He may depart, leave her and every one  
To linger out the penance in mute stone.  
Ah, but Sordello ? 'Tis the tale I mean  
To tell you. In this castle may be seen,  
On the hill tops, or underneath the vines,  
Or southward by the mound of firs and pines  
That shuts out Mantua, still in loneliness,  
A slender boy in a loose page's dress,  
Sordello : do but look on him awhile  
Watching ('tis autumn) with an earnest smile  
The noisy flock of thievish birds at work  
Among the yellowing vineyards ; see him lurk  
( 'Tis winter with its sullenest of storms )  
Beside that arras-length of broidered forms.  
On tiptoe, lifting in both hands a light  
Which makes yon warrior's visage flutter bright  
—Ecelo, dismal father of the brood,  
And Ecelin, close to the girl he wooed  
—Auria, and their Child, with all his wives

## SORDELLO

From Agnes to the Tuscan that survives,  
Lady of the castle, Adelaide : his face  
—Look, now he turns away ! Yourselves shall trace  
(The delicate nostril swerving wide and fine,  
A sharp and restless lip, so well combine  
With that calm brow) a soul fit to receive  
Delight at every sense ; you can believe  
Sordello foremost in the regal class  
Nature has broadly severed from her mass  
Of men and framed for pleasure as she frames  
Some happy lands that have luxurious names  
For loose fertility ; a footfall there  
Suffices to upturn to the warm air  
Half-germinating spices, mere decay  
Produces richer life, and day by day  
New pollen on the lily-petal grows,  
And still more labyrinthine buds the rose.  
You recognise at once the finer dress  
Of flesh that amply lets in loveliness  
At eye and ear, while round the rest is furled  
(As though she would not trust them with her  
world)

A veil that shows a sky not near so blue,  
And lets but half the sun look fervid through :  
How can such love like souls on each full-fraught  
Discovery brooding, blind at first to aught  
Beyond its beauty ; till exceeding love  
Becomes an aching weight, and, to remove  
A curse that haunts such natures—to preclude  
Their finding out themselves can work no good  
To what they love nor make it very blest  
By their endeavour, they are fain invest  
The lifeless thing with life from their own soul  
Availing it to purpose, to control,  
To dwell distinct and have peculiar joy  
And separate interests that may employ  
That beauty fitly, for its proper sake ;  
Nor rest they here : fresh births of beauty wake  
Fresh homage ; every grade of love is past,  
With every mode of loveliness ; then cast

## SORDELLO

Inferior idols off their borrowed crown  
Before a coming glory : up and down  
Runs arrowy fire, while earthly forms combine  
To throb the secret forth ; a touch divine—  
And the scaled eyeball owns the mystic rod :  
Visibly through his garden walketh God.

So fare they—Now revert : one character  
Denotes them through the progress and the stir ;  
A need to blend with each external charm,  
Bury themselves, the whole heart wide and warm,  
In something not themselves ; they would belong  
To what they worship—stronger and more strong  
Thus prodigally fed—that gathers shape  
And feature, soon imprisons past escape  
The votary framed to love and to submit  
Nor ask, as passionate he kneels to it,  
Whence grew the idol's empery. So runs  
A legend ; Light had birth ere moons and suns,  
Flowing through space a river and alone,  
Till chaos burst and blank the spheres were strown  
Hither and thither, foundering and blind,  
When into each of them rushed Light—to find  
Itself no place, foiled of its radiant chance.  
Let such forego their just inheritance,  
For there's a class that eagerly looks, too,  
On beauty, but, unlike the gentler crew,  
Proclaims each new revelation born a twin  
With a distinctest consciousness within  
Referring still the quality, now first  
Revealed, to their own soul ; its instinct nursed  
In silence, now remembered better, shown  
More thoroughly, but not the less their own ;  
A dream come true ; the special exercise  
Of any special function that implies  
The being fair or good or wise or strong,  
Dormant within their nature all along—  
Whose fault ? So homage other souls direct  
Without, turns inward ; how should this deject  
Thee, soul ? they murmur ; wherefore strength be  
quelled



## SORDELLO

Because, its trivial accidents withheld,  
Organs are missed that clog the world, inert,  
Wanting a will, to quicken and exert,  
Like thine—existence cannot satiate  
Cannot surprise: laugh thou at envious fate,  
Who from earth's simplest combination stamp  
With individuality—uncramp  
By living its faint elemental life,  
Dost soar to heaven's complexest essence, rife  
With grandeurs, unaffronted to the last,  
Equal to being all.

                    In truth? Thou hast  
Life, then—wilt challenge life for us: thy race  
Is vindicated so, obtains its place  
In thy ascent, the first of us; whom we  
May follow, to the meanest, finally,  
With our more bounded wills?

                    Ah, but to find  
A certain mood enervate such a mind,  
Counsel it slumber in the solitude  
Thus reached nor, stooping, task for mankind's good  
Its nature just as life and time accord  
(Too narrow an arena to reward  
Emprize—the world's occasion worthless since  
Not absolutely fitted to evince  
Its mastery) or if yet worse befall,  
And a desire possess it to put all  
That nature forth, forcing our straightened sphere  
Contain it; to display completely here  
The mastery another life should learn,  
Thrusting in time eternity's concern,  
So that Sordello. . . . Fool, who spied the mark  
Of leprosy upon him, violet dark  
Already as he loiters? Born just now—  
With the new century—beside the glow  
And efflorescence out of barbarism;  
Witness a Greek or two from the abysm  
That stray through Florence-town with studious air,  
Calming the chisel of that Pisan pair . . .  
If Nicolo should carve a Christus yet!

## SORDELLO

While at Sienna is Guidone set,  
Forehead on hand ; a painful birth must be  
Matured ere San Eufemio's sacristy  
Or transept gather fruits of one great gaze  
At the noon-sun : look you ! An orange haze—  
The same blue stripe round that—and, i' the midst,  
Thy spectral whiteness, mother-maid, who didst  
Pursue the dizzy painter !

Woe then worth

Any officious babble letting forth  
The leprosy confirmed and ruinous  
To spirit lodged in a contracted house !  
Go back to the beginning rather ; blend  
It gently with Sordello's life ; the end  
Is piteous, you shall see, but much between  
Pleasant enough ; meantime some pyx to screen  
The full-grown pest, some lid to shut upon  
The goblin ! As they found at Babylon,  
(Colleagues mad Lucius and sage Antonine)  
Sacking the city, by Apollo's shrine  
Its pride, in rummaging the rarities,  
A cabinet ; be sure who made the prize  
Opened it greedily ; and out there curled  
Just such another plague, for half the world  
Was stung. Crawl in then, hag, and crouch asquat,  
Keeping that blotchy bosom thick in spot  
Until your time is ripe ! The coffer-lid  
Is fastened and the coffer safely hid  
Under the Loxian's choicest gifts of gold.  
Who will may hear Sordello's story told,  
And how he never could remember when  
He dwelt not at Goito ; calmly then  
About this secret lodge of Adelaide's  
Glided his youth away : beyond the glades  
On the fir-forest's border, and the rim  
Of the low range of mountain, was for him  
No other world : but that appeared his own  
To wander through at pleasure and alone.  
The castle too seemed empty ; far and wide  
Might he disport ; unless the northern side

## SORDELLO

Lay under a mysterious interdict—  
Slight, just enough remembered to restrict  
His roaming to the corridors, the vault  
Where those font-bearers expiate their fault,  
The maple-chamber, and the little nooks  
And nests and breezy parapet that looks  
Over the woods to Mantua; there he strolled.  
Some foreign women-servants, very old,  
Tended and crept about him—all his clue  
To the world's business and embroiled ado  
Distant a dozen hill-tops at the most.  
And first a simple sense of life engrossed  
Sordello in his drowsy Paradise;  
The day's adventures for the day suffice—  
Its constant tribute of perceptions strange  
With sleep and stir in healthy interchange  
Suffice, and leave him for the next at ease  
Like the great palmer-worm that strips the trees,  
Eats the life out of every luscious plant,  
And when September finds them sere or scant  
Puts forth two wondrous winglets, alters quite,  
And hies him after unforeseen delight;  
So fed Sordello, not a shard disheathed;  
As ever round each new discovery wreathed  
Luxuriantly the fancies infantine  
His admiration, bent on making fine  
Its novel friend at any risk, would fling  
In gay profusion forth: a ficklest king  
Confessed those minions! Eager to dispense  
So much from his own stock of thought and sense  
As might enable each to stand alone  
And serve him for a fellow; with his own  
Joining the qualities that just before  
Had graced some older favourite: so they wore  
A fluctuating halo, yesterday  
Set flicker and to-morrow filched away:  
Those upland objects each of separate name,  
Each with an aspect never twice the same,  
Waxing and waning as the new-born host  
Of fancies, like a single night's hoar-frost,

## SORDELLO

Gave to familiar things a face grotesque ;  
Only, preserving through the mad burlesque  
A grave regard : conceive ; the orpine patch  
Blossoming earliest on the log-house-thatch  
The day those archers wound along the vines—  
Related to the Chief that left their lines  
To climb with clinking step the northern stair  
Up to the solitary chambers where  
Sordello never came. Thus thrall reached thrall ;  
He o'er-festooning every interval  
As the adventurous spider, making light  
Of distance, shoots her threads from depth to height,  
From barbican to battlement ; so flung  
Fantasies forth and in their centre swung  
Our architect : the breezy morning fresh  
Above, and merry ; all his waving mesh  
Laughing with lucid dew-drops rainbow-edged.  
This world of ours by tacit pact is pledged  
To laying such a spangled fabric low  
Whether by gradual brush or gallant blow :  
But its abundant will was balked here : doubt  
Rose tardily in one so fenced about  
From most that natures judgment, care and pain :  
Judgment, that dull expedient we are fain,  
Less favoured, to adopt betimes and force  
Stead us, diverted from our natural course  
Of joys ; contrive some yet amid the dearth,  
Vary and render them, it may be, worth  
Most we forego : suppose Sordello hence  
Selfish enough, without a moral sense  
However feeble ; what informed the boy  
Others desired a portion in his joy ?  
Or say a ruthless chance broke woof and warp—  
A heron's nest beat down by March winds sharp,  
A fawn breathless beneath the precipice,  
A bird with unsoiled breast and filmless eyes  
Warm in the brake—could these undo the trance  
Lapping Sordello ? Not a circumstance  
That makes for you, friend Naddo ! Eat fern-seed  
And peer beside us and report indeed

## SORDELLO

If (your word) Genius dawned with throes and stings  
And the whole fiery catalogue, while springs  
Summers and winters quietly came and went,  
Putting at length that period to content  
By right the world should have imposed : bereft  
Of its good offices, Sordello, left  
To study his companions, managed rip  
Their fringe off, learn the true relationship,  
Core with its crust, their natures with his own ;  
Amid his wild-wood sights he lived alone :  
As if the poppy felt with him ! Though he  
Partook the poppy's red effrontery  
Till Autumn spoils their fleering quite with rain,  
And, turbanless, a coarse brown rattling crane  
Protrudes : that's gone ! yet why renounce, for that,  
His disenchanting tributaries—flat  
Perhaps, but scarce so utterly forlorn  
Their simple presence may not well be borne  
Whose parley was a transport once : recall  
The poppy's 'gifts, it flaunts you, after all,  
A poppy : why distrust the evidence  
Of each soon satisfied and healthy sense ?  
The new-born Judgment answered : little boots  
Beholding other creatures' attributes  
And having none : or say that it sufficed,  
Yet, could one but possess, oneself, (enticed  
Judgment) some special office ! Nought beside  
Serves you ? Well then, be somehow justified  
For this ignoble wish to circumscribe  
And concentrate, rather than swell, the tribe  
Of actual pleasures : what now from without  
Effects it ?—proves, despite a lurking doubt,  
Mere sympathy sufficient, trouble spared ;  
—He tasted joys by proxy, clearly fared  
The better for them ; thus much craved his soul.  
Alas, from the beginning Love is whole  
And true ; if sure of nought beside, most sure  
Of its own truth at least ; nor may endure  
A crowd to see its face, that cannot know  
How hot the pulses throb its heart below ;

## SORDELLO

While its own helplessness and utter want  
Of means to worthily be ministrant  
To what it worships, do but fan the more  
Its flame, exalt the idol far before  
Itself as it would have it ever be;  
Souls like Sordello, on the contrary,  
Coerced and put to shame, retaining Will,  
Care little, take mysterious comforts still,  
But look forth tremblingly to ascertain  
If others judge their claims not urged in vain  
—Will say for them their stifled thoughts aloud;  
So they must ever live before a crowd:  
Vanity, Naddo tells you.

Whence contrive  
A crowd, now? These brave women just alive,  
That archer-troop? Forth glided—not alone  
Each painted warrior, every girl of stone,  
—Nor Adelaide bent double o'er a scroll,  
One maiden at her knees, that eve his soul  
Shook as he stumbled through the arras'd glooms  
On them, for, 'mid quaint robes and weird perfumes,  
Started the meagre Tuscan up (her eyes  
The maiden's also, bluer with surprise)  
—But the entire out-world: whatever scraps  
And snatches, song and story, dreams perhaps,  
Conceited the world's offices, and he  
Transferred to the first comer, flower or tree,  
Nor counted a befitting heritage  
Each, of its own right, singly to engage  
Some Man, no other; such availed to stand  
Alone: strength, wisdom, grace on every hand  
Soon disengaged themselves; and he discerned  
A sort of human life: at least, was turned  
A stream of life-like figures through his brain  
—Lord, Liegeman, Valvassor and Suzerain,  
Ere he could choose, surrounded him; a stuff  
To work his pleasure on; there, sure enough,  
But as for gazing, what shall fix that gaze?  
Are they to amply testify the ways  
He who convoked them sends his soul along

## SORDELLO

With the cloud's thunder or a dove's brood-song?  
While they live each its life, boast each its own  
Peculiar dower of bliss, stand each alone  
In some one point where something dearest loved  
Is easiest gained—far worthier to be proved  
Than aught he envies in the forest-wights!  
No simple and self-evident delights,  
But mixed desires of unimagined range,  
Contrasts or combinations, new and strange,  
Irksome perhaps, yet plainly recognised  
By this, the sudden company—loves prized  
By those who are to prize his own amount  
Of loves. Once care because such make account,  
Allow a foreign recognition stamp  
The current value, and your crowd shall vamp  
You counterfeits enough; and so their print  
Be on the piece, 'tis gold, attests the mint  
And good, pronounce they whom my new appeal  
Is made to: if their casual print conceal—  
This arbitrary good of theirs o'ergloss  
What I have lived without, nor felt my loss—  
Qualities strange, ungainly, wearisome,  
—What matter? so must speech expand the dumb  
Part sigh, part smile with which Sordello, late  
No foolish woodland-sights could satiate,  
Betakes himself to study hungrily  
Just what the puppets his crude fantasy  
Supposes notablest, popes, kings, priests, knights,  
May please to promulgate for appetites;  
Accepting all their artificial joys  
Not as he views them, but as he employs  
Each shape to estimate the others stock  
Of attributes, that on a marshalled flock  
Of authorised enjoyments he may spend  
Himself, be Men, now, as he used to blend  
With tree and flower—nay more entirely, else  
'Twere mockery: for instance, how excels  
My life that Chieftain's? (who apprised the youth  
Ecelin, here, becomes this month in truth,  
Imperial Vicar?) Turns he in his tent

## SORDELLO

Remissly? Be it so—my head is bent  
Deliciously amid my girls to sleep:  
What if he stalks the Trentine-pass? Yon steep  
I climbed an hour ago with little toil—  
We are alike there: but can I, too, foil  
The Guelfs' paid stabber, carelessly afford  
St. Mark's a spectacle, the sleight o' the sword  
Baffling their project in a moment? Here  
No rescue! Poppy he is none, but peer  
To Ecelin, assuredly: his hand,  
Fashioned no otherwise, should wield a brand  
With Ecelin's success—try, now! He soon  
Was satisfied, returned as to the moon  
From earth; left each abortive boy's-attempt  
For feats, from failure happily exempt,  
In fancy at his beck. One day I will  
Accomplish it! Are they not older still  
—Not grown up men and women? 'Tis besides  
Only a dream; and though I must abide  
With dreams now, I may find a thorough vent  
For all myself, acquire an instrument  
For acting what these people act; my soul  
Hunting a body out; obtain its whole  
Desire some day! How else express chagrin  
And resignation, show the hope steal in  
With which he let sink from an aching wrist  
The rough-hewn ash-bow, and a gold shaft hiss'd  
Into the Syrian air, struck Malek down  
Superbly! Crosses to the breach! God's Town  
Was gained Him back! Why bend rough ash-bows  
more?

So lives he: if not careless as before,  
Comforted: for one may anticipate,  
Rehearse the future; be prepared when fate  
Shall have prepared in turn real men whose names  
Startle, real places of enormous fames,  
Estes abroad and Ecelins at home  
To worship him, Mantuas, Veronas, Rome  
To witness it. Who grudges time so spent!  
Rather test qualities to heart's content—



## SORDELLO

Summon them, thrice selected, near and far—  
Compress the starriest into one star  
So grasp the whole at once! The pageant's thinned  
Accordingly; from rank to rank, like wind  
His spirit passed to winnow and divide;  
Back fell the simpler phantasms; every side  
The strong clave to the wise; with either classed  
The beauteous; so, till two or three amassed  
Mankind's beseemingnesses, and reduced  
Themselves eventually, graces loosed,  
And lavished strengths, to heighten up One Shape  
Whose potency no creature should escape:  
Can it be Friedrich of the bowmen's talk?  
Surely that grape-juice, bubbling at the stalk,  
Is some grey scorching Saracenic wine  
The Kaiser quaffs with the Miramoline—  
Those swarthy hazel-clusters, seamed and chapped,  
Or filberts russet-sheathed and velvet-capped,  
Are dates plucked from the bough John Brienne sent  
To keep in mind his sluggish armament  
Of Canaan . . . Friedrich's, all the pomp and fierce  
Demeanour! But harsh sounds and sights transpierce  
So rarely the serene cloud where he dwells  
Whose looks enjoin, whose lightest words are spells  
Upon the obdurate; that arm indeed  
Has thunder for its slave; but where's the need  
Of thunder if the stricken multitude  
Hearkens, arrested in its angriest mood,  
While songs go up exulting, then dispread,  
Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead  
Like an escape of angels? 'Tis the tune,  
Nor much unlike the words the women croon  
Smilingly, colourless and faint designed  
Each as a worn-out queen's face some remind  
Of her extreme youth's love-tales. Eglamor  
Made that! Half minstrel and half emperor,  
Who but ill objects vexed him? \*Such he slew.  
The kinder sort were easy to subdue  
By those ambrosial glances, dulcet tones;  
And these a gracious hand advanced to thrones

## §ORDELLO

Beneath him. Wherefore twist and torture this,  
Striving to name afresh the antique bliss,  
Instead of saying, neither less nor more,  
He had discovered, as our world before,  
Apollo? That shall be the name; nor bid  
Me rag by rag expose how patchwork hid  
The man—what thefts of every clime and day  
Contributed to purfle the array  
He climbs with (June's at deep) some close ravine  
'Mid clatter of its million pebbles sheen,  
Over which singing soft the runnel slipt  
Elate with rains: into whose streamlet dipt  
He foot, yet trod, you thought, with unwet sock—  
Though really on the stubs of living rock  
Ages ago it crenneled; vines for roof,  
Lindens for wall; before him, aye aloof,  
Flittered in the cool some azure damsel-fly,  
Child of the simmering quiet, there to die:  
Emerging whence, Apollo still, he spied  
Mighty descents of forest; multiplied  
Tuft on tuft, here, the frolic myrtle-trees;  
There gendered the grave maple-stocks at ease;  
And, proud of its observer, strait the wood  
Tried old surprises on him; black it stood  
A sudden barrier ('twas a cloud passed o'er)  
So dead and dense the tiniest brute no more  
Must pass; yet presently (the cloud despatched)  
Each clump, forsooth, was glistening detached  
A shrub, oak-boles shrunk into ilex-stems!  
Yet could not he denounce the stratagems  
He saw thro', till, hours thence, aloft would hang  
White summer-lightnings; as it sank and sprang  
In measure, that whole palpitating breast  
Of Heaven, 'twas Apollo nature prest  
At eve to worship.

Time stole: by degrees  
The Pythons perished off; his votaries  
Sunk to respectful distance; songs redeem  
Their pains, but briefer; their dismissals seem  
Emphatic; only girls are very slow

## SORDELLO

To disappear: his Delians! Some that glow  
O' the instant, more with earlier loves to wrench  
Away, reserves to quell, disdains to quench;  
Alike in one material circumstance—  
All soon or late adore Apollo! Glance  
The bevy through, divine Apollo's choice,  
A Daphne! We secure Count Richard's voice  
In Este's counsels, one for Este's ends  
As our Taurello, say his faded friends,  
By granting him our Palma! The sole child,  
They mean, of Agnes Este who beguiled  
Ecelin, years before this Adelaide  
Wedded and turned him wicked; but the maid  
Rejects his suit, those sleepy women boast.  
She, scorning all beside, deserves the most  
Sordello: so conspicuous in his world  
Of dreams sate Palma. How the tresses curled  
Into a sumptuous swell of gold and wound  
About her like a glory, even the ground  
Was bright as with shed sunbeams; (breathe not,  
breathe  
Not)—poised, see, one leg doubled underneath,  
Its small foot buried in the dimpling snow,  
Rests, but the other, listlessly below,  
O'er the couch-side swings feeling for cool air,  
The vein-streaks swoln a richer violet where  
The languid blood lies heavily; and calm  
On her slight prop, each flat and outspread palm,  
As but suspended in the act to rise  
By consciousness of beauty, whence her eyes  
Turn with so frank a triumph, for she meets  
Apollo's gaze in the pine-glooms.

Time fleets  
That's worst! Because the pre-appointed age  
Approaches. Fate is tardy with the stage  
She all but promised. Lean he grows and pale,  
Though restlessly at rest. Hardly avail  
Fancies to sooth him. Time steals, yet alone  
He tarries here! The earnest smile is gone.  
How long this might continue matters not:

## SORDELLO

For ever, possibly; since to the spot  
None come: for lingering Taurello quits  
Mantua at last, and light our lady flits  
Back to her place disburthened of a care.  
Strange—to be constant here if he is there!  
Is it distrust? Oh, never! for they both  
Goad Ecelin alike—Romano's growth  
So daily manifest that Azzo's dumb  
And Richard wavers . . . let but Friedrich come!  
—Find matter for the minstrelsy's report  
Lured from the Isle and its young Kaiser's court  
To sing us a Messina morning up;  
Who, double rillets of a drinking cup,  
Sparkle along to ease the land of drouth,  
Northward to Provence that, and thus far south  
The other: what a method to apprise  
Neighbours of births, espousals, obsequies!  
Which in their very tongue the Troubadour  
Records; and his performance makes a tour,  
For Trouveres bear the miracle about,  
Explain its cunning to the vulgar rout,  
Until the Formidable House is famed  
Over the country—as Taurello aimed  
Who introduced, although the rest adopt,  
The novelty. Their games her absence stopped  
Begin afresh now Adelaide, recluse  
No longer, in the light of day pursues  
Her plans at Mantua—whence an accident  
That breaking on Sordello's mixed content  
Opened, like any flash that cures the blind,  
The veritable business of mankind.

## BOOK THE SECOND

THE woods were long austere with snow: at last  
Pink leaflets budded on the beech, and fast  
Larches, scattered through pine-tree solitudes,

## SORDELLO

Brightened, "as in the slumbrous heart o' the woods  
Our buried year, a witch, grew young again  
To placid incantations, and that stain  
About were from her caldron, green smoke blent  
With those black pines"—so Eglamor gave vent  
To a chance fancy: whence a just rebuke  
From his companion; brother Naddo shook  
The solemnest of brows: Beware, he said,  
Of setting up conceits in Nature's stead!  
Forth wandered our Sordello. Nought so sure  
As that to-day's adventure will secure  
Palma, the forest-lady—only pass  
O'er yon damp mound and its exhausted grass,  
Under that brake where sundawn feeds the stalks  
Of withered fern with gold, into those walks  
Of pine and take her! Buoyantly he went.  
Again his stooping forehead was besprent  
With dew-drops from the skirting ferns. Then wide  
Opened the great morass, shot every side  
With flashing water through and through; a-shine,  
Thick steaming, all alive. Whose shape divine  
Quivered i' the farthest rainbow-vapour, glanced  
Athwart the flying herons? He advanced,  
But warily; though Mincio leaped no more,  
Each foot-fall burst up in the marish-floor  
A diamond jet: and if you stooped to pick  
Rose-lichen, or molest the leeches quick,  
And circling blood-worms, minnow, newt or loach,  
A sudden pond would silently encroach  
This way and that. On Palma passed. The verge  
Of a new wood was gained. She will emerge  
Flushed, now, and panting; crowds to see; will own.  
She loves him—Boniface to hear, to groan,  
To leave his suit! One screen of pine-trees still  
Opposes: but—the startling spectacle—  
Mantua, this time! Under the walls—a crowd  
Indeed—real men and women—gay and loud  
Round a pavilion. How he stood!

In truth

No prophecy had come to pass: his youth

## SORDELLO

In its prime now—and where was homage poured  
Upon Sordello?—born to be adored,  
And suddenly discovered weak, scarce made  
To cope with any, cast into the shade  
By this and this. Yet something seemed to prick  
And tingle in his blood; a sleight—a trick—  
And much would be explained. It went for naught—  
The best of their endowments were ill bought  
With his identity: nay, the conceit  
This present roving leads to Palma's feet  
Was not so vain . . . list! The word, Palma? Steal  
Aside, and die, Sordello; this is real,  
And this—abjure!

What next? The curtains, see,  
Dividing! She is there; and presently  
He will be there—the proper You, at length—  
In your own cherished dress of grace and strength:  
Most like the very Boniface . . .

Not so.

It was a showy man advanced; but though  
A glad cry welcomed him, then every sound  
Sank and the crowd disposed themselves around,  
—This is not he, Sordello felt; while “Place  
For the best Troubadour of Boniface,”  
Hollaed the Jongleurs, “Eglamor whose lay  
Concludes his patron's Court of Love to-day.”  
Obsequious Naddo strung his master's lute  
With the new lute-string, Elys, named to suit  
The song. He stealthily at watch, the while,  
Biting his lip to keep down a great smile  
Of pride: then up he struck. Sordello's brain  
Swam; for he knew a sometime deed again;  
So could supply each foolish gap and chasm  
The minstrel left in his enthusiasm,  
Mistaking its true version—was the tale  
Not of Apollo? Only, what avail  
Luring her down, that Elys an he pleased,  
If the man dares no further? Has he ceased?  
And, lo, the people's frank applause half done,  
Sordello was beside him, had begun

## SORDELLO

(Spite of indignant twitchings from his friend  
The Trouvere) the true lay with the true end,  
Taking the other's names and time and place  
For his. On flew the song, a giddy race,  
After the flying story; word made leap  
Out word; rhyme—rhyme; the lay could barely keep  
Pace with the action visibly rushing past:  
Both ended. Back fell Naddo more aghast  
Than your Egyptian from the harassed bull  
That wheels abrupt and, bellowing, fronts full  
His plague, who spies a scarab 'neath his tongue,  
And finds 'twas Apis' flank his hasty prong  
Insulted. But the people—but the cries,  
And crowding round, and proffering the prize!  
(For he had gained some prize)—He seemed to shrink  
Into a sleepy cloud, just at whose brink  
One sight withheld him; there sat Adelaide,  
Silent; but at her knees the very maid  
Of the North Chamber, her red lips as rich,  
The same pure fleecy hair; one curl of which,  
Golden and great, quite touched his cheek as o'er.  
She leant, speaking some six words and no more;  
He answered something, anything; and she  
Unbound a scarf and laid it heavily  
Upon him, her neck's warmth and all; again  
Moved the arrested magic; in his brain  
Noises grew, and a light that turned to glare,  
And greater glare, until the intense flare  
Engulfed him, shut the whole scene from his sense,  
And when he woke 'twas many a furlong thence,  
At home: the sun shining his ruddy wont;  
The customary birds'-chirp; but his front  
Was crowned—was crowned! Her scented scarf  
around

His neck! Whose gorgeous vesture heaps the ground?  
A prize? He turned, and peeringly on him  
Brooded the women faces, kind and dim,  
Ready to talk. The Jongleurs in a troupe  
Had brought him back, Naddo and Squarcialupe  
And Tagliafer; how strange! a childhood spent

## SORDELLO

Assuming, well for him, so brave a bent !  
Since Eglamor, they heard, was dead with spite,  
And Palma chose him for her minstrel.

Light

Sordello rose—to think, now ; hitherto  
He had perceived. Sure a discovery grew  
Out of it all ! Best live from first to last  
The transport o'er again. A week he passed  
Sucking the sweet out of each circumstance,  
From the bard's outbreak to the luscious trance  
Bounding his own achievement. Strange ! A man  
Recounted that adventure, and began  
Imperfectly ; his own task was to fill  
The frame-work up, sing well what he sang ill,  
Supply the necessary points, set loose  
As many incidents of little use  
—More imbecile the other, not to see  
Their relative importance clear as he !  
But for a special pleasure in the act  
Of singing—had he ever turned, in fact,  
From Elys, to sing Elys?—from each fit  
Of rapture, to contrive a song of it ?  
True, this snatch or the other seemed to wind  
Into a treasure, helped himself to find  
A beauty in himself ; for, see, he soared  
By means of that mere snatch to many a hoard  
Of fancies ; as some falling cone bears oft  
The eye, along the fir-tree-spire, aloft  
To a dove's nest. Then how divine the cause  
Such a performance should exact applause  
From men if they have fancies too ? Can Fate  
Decree they find a beauty separate  
In the poor snatch itself . . . our Elys, there,  
("Her head that's sharp and perfect like a pear,  
So close and smooth are laid the few fine locks  
Coloured like honey oozed from topmost rocks  
Sun-blanced the livelong summer")—if they heard  
Just those two rhymes, assented at my word,  
And loved them as I love them who have run  
These fingers through those fine locks, let the sun



## SORDELLO

Into the white cool skin . . . nay, thus I clutch  
Those locks!—I needs must be a God to such.  
Of if some few, above themselves, and yet  
Beneath me, like their Eglamor, have set  
An impress on our gift? So men believe  
And worship what they know not, nor receive  
Delight from. Have they fancies—slow, perchance,  
Not at their beck, which indistinctly glance  
Until by song each floating part be linked  
To each, and all grow palpable, distinct?  
He pondered this.

Meanwhile sounds low and drear  
Stole on him, and a noise of footsteps, near  
And nearer, and the underwood was pushed  
Aside, the larches grazed, the dead leaves crushed  
At the approach of men. The wind seemed laid;  
Only, the trees shrunk slightly and a shade  
Came o'er the sky although 'twas midday yet:  
You saw each half-shut downcast violet  
Flutter—a Roman bride, when they dispart  
Her unbound tresses with the Sabine dart,  
Holding that famous rape in memory still,  
Felt creep into her curls the iron chill,  
And looked thus, Eglamor would say—indeed  
'Tis Eglamor, no other, these precede  
Home hither in the woods. 'Twere surely sweet  
Far from the scene of one's forlorn defeat  
To sleep! thought Naddo, who in person led  
Jongleurs and Trouveres, chanting at their head,  
A scanty company; for, sooth to say,  
Our beaten Troubadour had seen his day:  
Old worshippers were something shamed, old friends  
Nigh weary; still the death proposed amends:  
Let us but get them safely through my song  
And home again, quoth Naddo.

All along,  
This man (they rest the bier upon the sand)  
—This calm corpse with the loose flowers in its hand,  
Eglamor, lived Sordello's opposite:  
For him indeed was Naddo's notion right

## SORDELLO

And Verse a temple-worship vague and vast,  
A ceremony that withdrew the last  
Opposing bolt, looped back the lingering veil  
Which hid the holy place—should one so frail  
Stand there without such effort? or repine  
That much was blank, uncertain at the shrine  
He knelt before, till, soothed by many a rite,  
The Power responded, and some sound or sight  
Grew up, his own forever! to be fixed  
In rhyme, the beautiful, forever; mixed  
With his own life, unloosed when he should please  
Having it safe at hand, ready to ease  
All pain, remove all trouble; every time  
He loosed that fancy from its bonds of rhyme,  
Like Perseus when he loosed his naked love  
Faltering; so distinct and far above  
Himself, these fancies! He, no genius rare,  
Transfiguring in fire or wave or air  
At will, but a poor gnome that, cloistered up,  
In some rock-chamber with his agate cup,  
His topaz rod, his seed-pearl, in these few  
And their arrangement finds enough to do  
For his best art. Then, how he loved that art!  
The calling marking him a man apart  
From men—one not to care, take counsel for  
Cold hearts, comfortless faces (Eglamor  
Was neediest of his tribe) since verse, the gift,  
Was his, and men, the whole of them, must shift  
Without it, e'en content themselves with wealth  
And pomp and power, snatching a life by stealth.  
So Eglamor was not without his pride!  
The sorriest bat which cowers through noontide  
While other birds are jocund, has one time  
When moon and stars are blinded, and the prime  
Of earth is its to claim, nor find a peer;  
And Eglamor was noblest poet here,  
He knew, among the April woods he cast  
Conceits upon in plenty as he past,  
That Naddo might suppose him not to think  
Entirely on the coming triumph; wink

## SORDELLO

At the one weakness! 'Twas a fervid child  
That song of his—no brother of the guild  
Had e'er conceived its like. The rest you know:  
The exaltation and the overthrow;  
Our poet lost his purpose, lost his rank,  
His life—to that it came. Yet envy sank  
Within him, as he heard Sordello out,  
And, for the first time, shouted—tried to shout  
Like others, not from any zeal to show  
Pleasure that way: the common sort did so,  
And what was Eglamor? who, bending down  
The same, placed his beneath Sordello's crown,  
Printed a kiss on his successor's hand,  
Left one great tear on it, then joined his band  
—In time; for some were watching at the door—  
Who knows what envy may effect? Give o'er,  
Nor charm his lips, nor craze him! (here one spied  
And disengaged the withered crown)—Beside  
His crown! How prompt and clear those verses  
rung

To answer yours! nay sing them And he sung  
Them calmly. Home he went; friends used to wait  
• His coming, anxious to congratulate,  
But, to a man, so quickly runs report,  
Could do no less than leave him, and escort  
His rival. That eve, then, bred many a thought  
What must his future life be: was he brought  
So low, who was so lofty this spring morn?  
At length he said, Best sleep now with my scorn,  
And by to-morrow I devise some plain  
Expedient! So he slept, nor woke again.  
They found as much, those friends, when they  
returned

O'erflowing with the marvels they had learned  
About Sordello's paradise, his roves  
Among the hills and valleys, plains and groves,  
Wherein, no doubt, this lay was roughly cast,  
Polished by slow degrees, completed last  
To Eglamor's discomfiture and death.

Such form the chanters now, and, out of breath,

## SORDELLO

They lay the beaten man in his abode,  
Naddo reciting that same luckless ode,  
Doleful to hear: Sordello could explore  
By means of it, however, one step more  
In joy; and, mastering the round at length,  
Learnt how to live in weakness as in strength,  
When from his covert forth he stood, addressed  
Eglamor, bade the tender ferns invest,  
Primeval pines o'er canopy his couch,  
And, most of all, his fame—(shall I avouch  
Eglamor heard it, dead though he might look,  
And laughed as from his brow Sordello took  
The crown, and laid it on his breast, and said,  
It was a crown, now, fit for poet's head?)  
—Continue. Nor the prayer quite fruitless fell;  
A plant they have yielding a three-leaved bell  
Which whitens at the heart ere noon, and ails  
Till evening; evening gives it to her gales  
To clear away with such forgotten things  
As are an eyesore to the morn: this brings  
Him to their mind, and bears his very name.

So much for Eglamor. My own month came;  
'Twas a sunrise of blossoming and May.  
Beneath a flowering laurel thicket lay  
Sordello; each new sprinkle of white stars  
That smell fainter of wine than Massic jars  
Dug up at Baiæ, when the south wind shed  
The ripest, made him happier; filleted  
And robed the same, only a lute beside  
Lay on the turf. Before him far and wide  
The country stretched: Goito slept behind  
—The castle and its covert which confined  
Him with his hopes and fears; so fain of old  
To leave the story of his birth untold.  
At intervals, 'spite the fantastic glow  
Of his Apollo-life, a certain low  
And wretched whisper winding through the bliss  
Admonished, no such fortune could be his,  
And was quite false and sure to fade one day:  
The closelier drew he round him his array

## SORDELLO

Of brilliance to expel the truth. But when  
A reason for his difference from men  
Surprised him at the grave, he took no rest  
While aught of that old life, superbly drest  
Down to its meanest incident, remained  
A mystery—alas, they soon explained  
Away Apollo! and the tale amounts  
To this: when at Vicenza both her Counts  
Banished the Vivaresi kith and kin,  
Those Maltraversi hung on Ecelin,  
Reviling as he followed; he for spite  
Must fire their quarter, though that self-same night  
Among the flames young Ecelin was born  
Of Adelaide, there too, and barely torn  
From the roused populace hard on the rear  
By a poor archer when his chieftain's fear  
Was high; into the thick Elcorte leapt,  
Saved her, and died; no creature left except  
His child to thank. And when the full escape  
Was known—how men impaled from chine to nape  
Unlucky Prata, all to pieces spurned  
Bishop Pistore's concubines, and burned  
Taurello's entire household, flesh and fell,  
Missing the sweeter prey—such courage well  
Might claim reward. The orphan, ever since,  
Sordello, had been nurtured by his prince  
Within a blind retreat where Adelaide  
(For, once this notable discovery made,  
The past at every point was understood)  
Can harbour easily when times are rude,  
When Este schemes for Palma—would retrieve  
That pledge, when Mantua is not fit to leave  
Longer unguarded with a vigilant eye,  
Taurello bides there so ambiguously  
(He who can have no motive now to moil  
For his own fortunes since their utter spoil)  
As it were worth while yet (goes the report)  
To disengage himself from us. In short,  
Apollo vanished; a mean youth, just named  
His lady's minstrel, was to be proclaimed

## SORDELLO

—How shall I phrase it? Monarch of the World.  
But on the morning that array was furled  
For ever, and in place of one a slave  
To longings, wild, indeed, but longings save  
In dreams as wild, suppressed—one daring not  
Assume the mastery such dreams allot,  
Until a magical equipment, strength  
Grace, wisdom, decked him too,—he chose at length  
(Content with unproved wits and failing frame)  
In virtue of his simple Will, to claim  
That mastery, no less—to do his best  
With means so limited, and let the rest  
Go by,—the seal was set: never again  
Sordello could in his own sight remain  
One of the many, one with hopes and cares  
And interests nowise distinct from theirs,  
Only peculiar in a thriveless store  
Of fancies, which were fancies and no more;  
Never again for him and for the crowd  
A common law was challenged and allowed  
If calmly reasoned of, howe'er denied  
By a mad impulse nothing justified  
Short of Apollo's presence: the divorce  
Is clear: why needs Sordello square his course  
By any known example? Men no more  
Compete with him than tree and flower before;  
Himself, inactive, yet is greater far  
Than such as act, each stooping to his star,  
Acquiring thence his function; he has gained  
The same result with meaner mortals trained  
To strength or beauty, moulded to express  
Each the idea that rules him; since no less  
He comprehends that function but can still  
Embrace the others, take of Might his fill  
With Richard as of Grace with Palma, mix  
Their qualities, or for a moment fix  
On one, abiding free meantime, uncramped  
By any partial organ, never stamped  
Strong, so to Strength turning all energies—  
Wise, and restricted to becoming Wise—

## SORDELLO

That is, he loves not, nor possesses One  
Idea that, star-like over, lures him on  
To its exclusive purpose. Fortunate  
This flesh of mine ne'er strove to emulate  
A soul so various—took no casual mould  
Of the first fancy and contracted, cold  
Lay clogged forever thence, averse to change  
As that. Whereas it left her free to range,  
Remains itself a blank, cast into shade,  
Encumbers little, if it cannot aid.  
So, range, my soul! Who by self-consciousness  
The last drop of all beauty dost express—  
The grace of seeing grace, a quintessence  
For thee: while for the world, that can dispense  
Wonder on men, themselves that wonder—make  
A shift to love at second hand and take  
Those for its idols who but idolize,  
Themselves,—that loves the soul as strong, as wise,  
Whose love is Strength, is Wisdom,—such shall bow  
Surely in unexampled worship now,  
Discerning me!—

(Dear monarch, I beseech,

Notice how lamentably wide a breach  
Is here! discovering this, discover too  
What our poor world has possibly to do  
With it! As pigmy natures as you please—  
So much the better for you; take your ease;  
Look on, and laugh; style yourself God alone;  
Strangle some day with a cross olive-stone;  
All that is right enough: but why want us  
To know that you yourself know thus and thus?  
Nay finish—)

—Bow to me conceiving all

Man's life, who sees its blisses, great and small,  
Afar—not tasting any: no machine  
To exercise my utmost will is mine,  
Therefore mere consciousness for me! Perceive  
What I could do, a mastery believe,  
Asserted and established to the throng  
By their selected evidence of Song

## SORDELLO

Which now shall prove whate'er they are, or seek  
To be, I am—who take no pains to speak,  
Change no old standards of perfection, vex  
With no strange forms created to perplex,  
But mean perform their bidding and no more,  
At their own satiating-point give o'er,  
And each shall love in me the love that leads  
His soul to its perfection. Song, not Deeds,  
(For we get tired) was chosen. Fate would brook  
Mankind no other organ; He would look  
For not another channel to dispense  
His own volition and receive their sense  
Of its existing, but would be content,  
Obstructed else, with merely verse for vent—  
Nor should, for instance, Strength an outlet seek  
And striving be admired, nor Grace bespeak  
Wonder, displayed in gracious attitudes,  
Nor Wisdom, poured forth, change unseemly moods;  
But he would give and take on Song's one point;  
Like some huge throbbing-stone that, poised a-joint,  
Sounds to affect on its basaltic bed  
Must sue in just one accent: tempests shed  
Thunder, and raves the landstorm: only let  
That key by any little noise be set—  
The far benighted hunter's halloo pitch  
On that, the hungry curlew chance to scritch  
Or serpent hiss it, rustling through the rift,  
However loud, however low—all lift  
The groaning monster, stricken to the heart.  
Lo ye, the world's concernment, for its part,  
And this, for his, will hardly interfere!  
Its businesses in blood and blaze this year  
—But wile the hour away—a pastime slight  
Till he shall step upon the platform: right!  
And now thus much is settled, cast in rough,  
Proved feasible, be counselled! thought enough,  
Slumber, Sordello! any day will serve:  
Were it a less digested plan! how swerve  
To-morrow? Meanwhile eat these sun-dried grapes  
And watch the soaring hawk there! Life escapes



## SORDELLO

Merrily thus.

He thoroughly read o'er  
His truchman Naddo's missive six times more,  
Praying him visit Mantua and supply  
A famished world.

The evening star was high  
When he reached Mantua, but his fame arrived  
Before him: friends applauded, foes connived,  
And Naddo looked an angel, and the rest  
Angels, and all these angels would be blest  
Supremely by a song—the thrice renowned  
Goito manufacture. Then he found  
(Casting about to satisfy the crowd)  
That happy vehicle, so late allowed,  
A sore annoyance; 'twas the song's effect  
He cared for, scarce the song itself: reflect!  
In the past life what might be singing's use?  
Just to delight his Delians, whose profuse  
Praise, not the toilsome process which procured  
That praise, enticed Apollo: dreams abjured,  
No over-leaping means for ends—take both  
For granted or take neither! I am loth  
To say the rhymes at last were Eglamor's;  
But Naddo, chuckling, bade competitors  
Go pine; the Master certes meant to waste  
No effort, cautiously had probed the taste  
He'd please anon: true bard, in short, disturb  
His title if they could; nor spur nor curb,  
Fancy nor reason, wanting in him; whence  
The staple of his verses, common sense:  
He built on Man's broad nature—gift of gifts  
That power to build! The world contented shifts  
With counterfeits enough, a dreary sort  
Of warriors, statesmen, ere it can extort  
Its poet-soul—that's, after all, a freak  
(The having eyes to see and tongue to speak)  
With our herd's stupid sterling happiness  
So plainly incompatible that—yes—  
Yes—should a son of his improve the breed  
And turn out poet he were cursed indeed.

## SORDELLO

Well, there's Goito to retire upon  
If the worst happen ; best go stoutly on  
Now ! thought Sordello.

Ay, and goes on yet !

You pother with your glossaries to get  
A notion of the Troubadour's intent—  
His Rondels, Tenzons, Virlai or Sirvent—  
Much as you study arras how to twirl  
His Angelot, plaything of page and girl,  
Once ; but you surely reach, at last,—or, no !  
Never quite reach what struck the people so,  
As from the welter of their time he drew  
Its elements successively to view,  
Followed all actions backward on their course  
And catching up, unmingled at the source,  
Such a Strength, such a Weakness, added then  
A touch or two, and turned them into Men.  
Virtue took form, nor Vice refused a shape ;  
Here Heaven opened, there was Hell agape,  
As Saint this simpered past in sanctity,  
Sinner the other flared portentous by  
A greedy People : then why stop, surprised  
At his success ? The scheme was realised  
Too suddenly in one respect : a crowd  
Praising, eyes quick to see, and lips as loud  
To speak, delicious homage to receive,  
Bianca's breath to feel upon his sleeve  
Who said, " But Anafest—why asks he less  
Than Lucio, in your verses ? how confess  
It seemed too much but yestereve ! " The youth  
Who bade him earnestly " avow the truth,  
You love Bianca, surely, from your song ;  
I knew I was unworthy ! " soft or strong,  
In poured such tributes ere he had arranged  
Etherial ways to take them, sorted, changed,  
Digested : courted thus at unawares,  
In spite of his pretensions and his cares  
He caught himself shamefully hankering  
After your obvious petty joys that spring  
From real life, fain relinquish pedestal

## SORDELLO

And condescend with pleasures—one and all  
To be renounced, no doubt; for thus to chain  
Himself to single joys and so refrain  
From tasting their quintessence, frustrates, sure,  
His prime design; each joy must he abjure  
Even for love of it.

He laughed: what sage  
But perishes if from his magic page  
He look because, at the first line, a proof  
'Twas heard salutes him from the cavern roof?  
On! Give thyself, excluding aught beside,  
To the day's task; compel thy slave provide  
Its utmost at the soonest; turn the leaf  
Thoroughly conned; these lays of thine, in brief—  
Cannot men bear, now, somewhat better?—fly  
A pitch beyond this unreal pageantry  
Of essences? the period sure has ceased  
For such: present us with ourselves, at least,  
Not portions of ourselves, mere loves and hates  
Made flesh: wait not!

Awhile the poet waits  
However. The first trial was enough:  
He left imagining, to try the stuff  
That held the imaged thing and, let it writhe  
Never so fiercely, scarce allowed a tithe  
To reach the light—his Language. How he sought  
The cause, conceived a cure, and slow re-wrought  
That Language, welding words into the crude  
Mass from the new speech round him, till a rude  
Armour was hammered out, in time to be  
Approved beyond the Roman panoply  
Melted to make it, boots not. This obtained  
With some ado, no obstacle remained  
To using it; accordingly he took  
An action with its actors, quite forsook  
Himself to live in each, returned anon  
With the result—a creature, and by one  
And one proceeded leisurely equip  
Its limbs in harness of his workmanship.  
Accomplished! Listen, Mantuans! Fond essay!

## SORDELLO

Piece after piece that armour broke away  
Because perceptions whole, like that he sought  
To clothe, reject so pure a work of thought  
As language : Thought may take Perception's place  
But hardly co-exist in any case,  
Being its mere presentment—of the Whole  
By Parts, the Simultaneous and the Sole  
By the Successive and the Many. Lacks  
The crowd perceptions? painfully it tacks  
Together thoughts Sordello, needing such,  
Has rent perception into: it's to clutch  
And reconstruct—his office to diffuse,  
Destroy : as difficult obtain a Muse  
In short, as be Apollo. For the rest,  
E'en if some wondrous vehicle exprest  
'The whole dream, what impertinence in me  
So to express it, who myself can be  
The dream! nor, on the other hand. are those.  
I sing to over-likely to suppose  
A higher than the highest I present  
Now, and they praise already : be content  
Both parties, rather : they with the old verse,  
And I with the old praise—far go, fare worse !  
A few adhering rivets loosed, upsprings  
The angel, sparkles off his mail, and rings  
Whirled from each delicatest limb it warps,  
As might Apollo from the sudden corpse  
Of Hyacinth have cast his luckless quoits.  
He set to celebrating the exploits  
Of Montfort o'er the Mountaineers.

Then came  
The world's revenge : their pleasure now his aim  
Merely—what was it? Not to play the fool  
So much as learn our lesson in your school,  
Replied the world : he found that every time  
He gained applause by any given rhyme  
His auditory recognised no jot  
As he intended, and mistaking not  
Him for his meanest hero, ne'er was dunce  
Sufficient to believe him—All at once.

## SORDELLO

His Will . . . conceive it caring for his Will!  
—Mantuans, the main of them, admiring still  
How a mere singer, ugly, stunted, weak,  
Had Montfort at completely (so to speak)  
His fingers' ends; while past the praise-tide swept  
To Montfort, either's share distinctly kept,  
The true meed for true merit—His abates  
Into a sort he most repudiates,  
And on them angrily he turns. Who were  
The Mantuans, after all, that he should care  
About their recognition, ay or no?  
In spite of the convention months ago,  
(Why blink the truth) was not he forced to help  
This same ungrateful audience, every whelp  
Of Naddo's litter, make them pass for peers  
With the bright band of those Goito years,  
As erst he toiled for flower or tree? Why there  
Sate Palma! Adelaide's funereal hair  
Ennobled the next corner. Ay, he strewed  
A fairy dust upon that multitude  
Although he feigned to take them by themselves;  
His giants dignified those puny elves,  
Sublimed their faint applause. In short he found  
Himself still footing a delusive round,  
Remote as ever from the self-display  
He meant to compass, hampered every way  
By what he hoped assistance. Wherefore then  
Continue, make believe to find in men  
A use he found not?

Weeks, months, years went by;  
And, lo, Sordello vanished utterly,  
Sundered in twain; each spectral part at strife  
With each; one jarred against another life;  
The Poet thwarting hopelessly the Man  
Who, fooled no longer, free in fancy ran  
Here, there; let slip no opportunities  
Forsooth, as pitiful beside the prize  
To drop on him some no-time and acquit  
His constant faith (the Poet-half's to wit)  
That waiving any compromise between

## SORDELLO

No joy and all joy kept the hunger keen  
Beyond most methods—of incurring scoff  
From the Man-portion not to be put off  
With self-reflectings by the Poet's scheme  
Though ne'er so bright; which sauntered forth in  
dream,

Dress'd any how, nor waited mystic frames,  
Immeasurable gifts, astounding claims,  
But just his sorry self; who yet might be  
Sorrier for aught he in reality  
Achieved, so pinioned that the Poet-part,  
Fondling, in turn of fancy, Verse; the Art  
Developing his soul a thousand ways;  
Potent, by its assistance, to amaze  
The multitude with majesties, convince  
Each sort of nature that same nature's prince  
Accosted it: language, the makeshift, grew  
Into a bravest of expedients, too;  
Apollo, seemed it now, perverse had thrown  
Quiver and bow away, the lyre alone  
Sufficed: while, out of dream, his day's work went  
To tune a crazy tenzon or sirvent—  
So hampered him the Man-part, thrust to judge  
Between the bard and the bard's audience, grudge  
A minute's toil that missed its due reward!  
But the complete Sordello, Man and Bard,  
John's cloud-girt angel, this foot on the land,  
That on the sea, with open in his hand  
A bitter-sweetling of a book—was gone.

And if internal struggles to be one,  
That frittered him incessantly piece-meal,  
Referred, ne'er so obliquely, to the real  
Mantuan! intruding ever with some call  
To action while he pondered, once for all,  
Which looked the easier effort—to pursue  
This course, still leap o'er paltry joys, yearn through  
The present ill-appreciated stage  
Of self-revelment and compel the age  
Know him; or else, forswearing bard-craft, wake  
From out his lethargy and nobly shake

## SORDELLO

Off timid habits of denial, mix  
With men, enjoy like men : ere he could fix  
On aught, in rushed the Mantuans ; much they cared  
For his perplexity ! Thus unprepared,  
The obvious if not only shelter lay  
In deeds the dull conventions of his day  
Prescribed the like of him : why not be glad  
'Tis settled Palma's minstrel, good or bad,  
Submits to this and that established rule ?  
Let Vidal change or any other fool  
His murrey-coloured robe for philamot  
And crop his hair ; so skin-deep, is it not,  
Such vigour ? Then, a sorrow to the heart,  
His talk ! Whatever topics they might start  
Had to be groped for in his consciousness  
Strait, and as strait delivered them by guess :  
Only obliged to ask himself, " What was,"  
A speedy answer followed, but, alas,  
One of God's large ones, tardy to condense  
Itself into a period ; answers whence  
A tangle of conclusions must be stripp'd  
At any risk ere, trim to pattern clipp'd,  
They matched rare specimens the Mantua flock  
Regaled him with, each talker from his stock  
Of sorted o'er opinions, every stage,  
Juicy in youth, or desiccate with age,  
Fruits like the fig-tree's, rathe-ripe, rotten-rich,  
Sweet-sour, all tastes to take : a practice which  
He too had not impossibly attained,  
Once either of those fancy-flights restrained ;  
For, at conjecture how the words appear  
To others, playing there what passes here,  
And occupied abroad by what he spurned  
At home, 'twas slipt the occasion he returned  
To seize : he'd strike that lyre adroitly—speech,  
Would but a twenty cubic plectre reach ;  
A clever hand, consummate instrument,  
Were both brought close ! each excellency went  
For nothing else. The question Naddo asked  
Had just a life-time moderately tasked

## SORDELLO

To answer, 'Naddo's fashion ; more disgust  
 And more ; why move his soul, since move it must  
 At minute's notice or as good it failed  
 To move at all ? The end was, he retailed  
 Some ready-made opinion, put to use  
 This quip, that maxim, ventured reproduce  
 Gestures and tones, at any folly caught  
 Serving to finish with, nor too much sought  
 If false or true 'twas spoken ; praise and blame  
 Of what he said grew pretty well the same  
 —Meantime awards to meantime acts : his soul,  
 Unequal to the compassing a Whole,  
 Saw in a tenth part less and less to strive  
 About. And as for Men in turn . . . contrive  
 Who could to take eternal interest  
 In them, so hate the worst, so love the best !  
 Though in pursuance of his passive plan  
 He hailed, decried the proper way.

As man

So figured he ; and how as Poet ? Verse  
 Came only not to a stand-still. The worse,  
 That this poor piece of daily work to do  
 Was not sink Under any rivals ; who  
 Loudly and long enough, without these qualms,  
 Tuned, from Bocafoli's stark-naked psalms,  
 To Plara's sonnets spoilt by toying with,  
 As knops that stud some almug to the pith  
 Prickèd for gum, wry thence, and crinklèd worse  
 Than pursed-up eyelids of a river-horse  
 Sunning himself o' the slime when whirrs the breeze  
 Ha, ha ! Of course he might compete with these  
 But—but—

Observe a pompion-twine afloat ;  
 Pluck me one cup from off the castle-moat—  
 Along with cup you raise leaf, stalk and root,  
 The entire surface of the pool to boot.  
 So could I pluck a cup, put in one song  
 A single sight, did not my hand, too strong,  
 Twitch in the least the root-strings of the whole.  
 How should externals satisfy my soul ?



## SORDELLO

Why that's precise the error Squarcialupe  
(Hazarded Naddo) finds; the man can't stoop  
To sing us out, quoth he, a mere romance;  
He'd fain do better than the best, enhance  
The subjects' rarity, work problems out  
Therewith: now you're a bard, a bard past doubt,  
And no philosopher; why introduce  
Crotchets like these? fine, surely, but no use  
In poetry—which still must be, to strike,  
Based upon common sense; there's nothing like  
Appealing to our nature! what beside  
Was your first poetry? No tricks were tried  
In that, no hollow thrills, affected throes!  
The man, said we, tells his own joys and woes—  
We'll trust him. Would you have your songs endure?  
Build on the human heart!—Why to be sure  
Yours is one sort of heart—but I mean theirs,  
Ours, every one's, the healthy heart one cares  
To build on! Central peace, mother of strength,  
That's father of . . . nay, go yourself that length,  
Ask those calm-hearted doers what they do  
When they have got their calm! Nay, is it true  
Fire rankles at the heart of every globe?  
Perhaps! But these are matters one may probe  
Too deeply for poetic purposes:  
Rather select a theory that . . . yes  
Laugh! what does that prove? . . . stations you  
midway  
And saves some little o'er-refining. Nay,  
That's rank injustice done me! I restrict  
The poet? Don't I hold the poet picked  
Out of a host of warriors, statesmen—did  
I tell you? Very like! as well you hid  
That sense of power you have! True bards believe  
Us able to achieve what they achieve—  
That is, just nothing—in one point abide  
Profounder simpletons than all beside:  
Oh ay! The knowledge that you are a bard  
Must constitute your prime, nay sole, reward!  
So prattled Naddo, busiest of the tribe

## SORDELLO

Of genius-haunters—how shall I describe  
What grubs or nips, or rubs, or rips—your louse  
For love, your flea for hate, magnanimous,  
Malignant, Pappacoda, Tagliafer,  
Picking a sustenance from wear and tear  
By implements it sedulous employs  
To undertake, lay down, mete out, o'er-toise  
Sordello? fifty creepers to elude  
At once! They settled stanchly; shame ensued:  
Behold the monarch of mankind succumb  
To the last fool who turned him round his thumb,  
As Naddo styled it! 'Twas not worth oppose  
The matter of a moment, gainsay those  
He aimed at getting rid of; better think  
Their thoughts and speak their speech, secure to slink  
Back expeditiously to his safe place,  
And chew the cud—what he and what his race  
Were really, each of them. Yet even this  
Conformity was partial. He would miss  
Some point, brought into contact with them ere  
Assured in what small segment of the sphere  
Of his existence they attended him;  
Whence blunders, falsehoods rectify—a grim  
List—slur it over! How? If dreams were tried,  
His will swayed sicklily from side to side  
Not merely neutralized his waking act  
But tended e'en in fancy to distract  
The intermediate will, the choice of means:  
He lost the art of dreaming; Mantua scenes  
Supplied a baron, say, he sung before,  
Handsomely reckless, full to running o'er  
Of gallantries; abjure the soul, content  
With body, therefore! Scarcely had he bent  
Himself in dream thus low when matter fast  
Cried out, he found, for spirit to contrast  
And task it duly; by advances slight,  
The simple stuff becoming composite,  
Count Lori grew Apollo—best recall  
His fancy! Then would some rough peasant-Paul  
Like those old Ecelin confers with, glance

## SORDELLO

His gay apparel o'er ; that countenance  
Gathered his shattered fancy into one,  
And, body clean abolished, soul alone  
Sufficed the grey Paulician : by and by  
To balance the ethereality  
Passions were needed ; foiled he sank again.

Meanwhile the world rejoiced ('tis time explain)  
Because a sudden sickness set it free  
From Adelaide. Missing the motherbee  
Her mountain hive Romano swarmed ; at once  
A rustle-forth of daughters and of sons  
Blackened the valley. I am sick too, old,  
Half crazed I think ; what good's the Kaiser's gold  
To such an one ? God help me ! for I catch  
My children's greedy sparkling eyes at watch—  
He bears that double breastplate on, they say,  
So many minutes less than yesterday !  
Besides Monk Hilary is on his kness  
Now, sworn to kneel and pray till God shall please  
Exact a punishment for many things  
You know and some you never knew ; which brings  
To memory, Azzo's sister Beatrix  
And Richard's Giglia are my Alberic's  
And Ecelin's betrothed ; the Count himself  
Must get my Palma : Ghibellin and Guelf  
Mean to embrace each other. So began  
Romano's missive to his fighting-man  
Taurello on the Tuscan's death, away  
With Friedrich sworn to sail from Naples' bay  
Next month for Syria. Never thunder-clap  
Out of Vesuvius' mount like this mishap  
Startled him. That accursed Vicenza ! I  
Absent, and she selects this time to die !  
Ho, fellows, for Vicenza ! Half a score  
Of horses ridden dead he stood before  
Romano in his reeking spurs : too late—  
Boniface urged me, Este could not wait,  
The chieftain stammered ; let me die in peace—  
Forget me ! Was it I e'er craved increase  
Of rule ? Do you and Friedrich plot your worst

## SORDELLO

Against the Father: as you found me first  
So leave me now. Forgive me! Palma, sure,  
Is at Goito still. Retain that lure—  
Only be pacified!

The country rung  
With such a piece of news: on every tongue  
How Ecelin's great servant, congeed off,  
Had done a long day's service, so might doff  
The green and yellow to recover breath  
At Mantua, whither, since Retrude's death,  
(The girlish slip of a Sicilian bride  
From Otho's House he carried to reside  
At Mantua till the Ferrarese should pile  
A structure worthy her imperial style,  
The gardens raise, their tenantry enshrine  
She never lived to see) although his line  
Was ancient in her archives and she took  
A pride in him, that city, nor forsook  
Her child though he forsook himself and spent  
A prowess on Romano surely meant  
For his own purposes—he ne'er resorts  
If wholly satisfied (to trust reports)  
With Ecelin. So forward in a trice  
Were shows to greet him. Take a friend's advice,  
Quoth Naddo to Sordello, nor be rash  
Because your rivals (nothing can abash  
Some folks) demur that we pronounced you best  
To sound the great man's welcome; 'tis a test  
Remember; Strojavacca looks asquint,  
The rough fat sloven; and there's plenty hint  
Your pinions have received of late a shock—  
Out-soar them, cobswan of the silver flock!  
Sing well! A signal wonder song's no whit  
Facilitated.

Fast the minutes flit;  
Another day, Sordello finds, will bring  
The soldier, and he cannot choose but sing;  
So quits, a last shift, Mantua—slow, alone:  
Out of that aching brain, a very stone,  
Song must be struck. What occupies that front?

## SORDELLO

Just how he was more awkward than his wont.  
The night before, when Naddo, who had seen  
Taurello on his progress, praised the mien  
For dignity no crosses could affect—  
Such was a joy, and might not he detect  
A satisfaction if established joys  
Were proved imposture? Poetry annoys  
Its utmost: wherefore fret? Verses may come  
Or keep away! And thus he wandered, dumb  
Till evening, when he paused, thoroughly spent,  
On a blind hill-top; down the gorge he went,  
Yielding himself up as to an embrace;  
The moon came out; like features of a face  
A querulous fraternity of pines,  
Sad blackthorn clumps, leafless and grovelling vines  
Also came out, made gradually up  
The picture; 'twas Goito's mountain-cup  
And castle. He had dropped through one defile  
He never dared explore, the Chief erewhile  
Had vanished by. Back rushed the dream, enwrap  
Him wholly. 'Twas Apollo now they lapped  
Those mountains, not a pettish minstrel meant  
To wear his soul away in discontent  
Brooding on fortune's malice; heart and brain  
Swelled; he expanded to himself again  
As that thin seedling spice-tree starved and frail  
Pushing between cat's head or ibis' tail  
Crusted into the porphyry pavement smooth  
—Suffered remain just as it sprung to soothe  
The Soldan's pining daughter, never yet  
Well in the chilly green-glazed minaret—  
When rooted up the sunny day she died  
And flung into the common court beside  
Its parent tree. Come home, Sordello! Soon  
Was he low muttering beneath the moon  
Of sorrow saved, of quiet evermore,  
How from his purposes maintained before  
Only resulted wailing and hot tears.  
Ah, the slim castle! dwindled of late years,  
But more mysterious; gone to ruin—trails

## SORDELLO

Of vine thro' every loop-hole. Nought avails  
The night as, torch in hand, he must explore  
The maple chamber—did I say its floor  
Was made of intersecting cedar beams?  
Worn now with gaps so large there blew cold streams  
Of air quite from the dungeon; lay your ear  
Close and 'tis like, one after one, you hear  
In the blind darkness water-drops. The nests  
And nooks retain their long ranged vesture-chests  
Empty and smelling of the iris-root  
The Tuscan grated o'er them to recruit  
Her wasted wits. Palma was gone that day,  
Said the remaining women. Last, he lay  
Beside the Carian group reserved and still.

The Body, the Machine for Acting Will  
Had been at the commencement proved unfit;  
That for Reflecting, Demonstrating it,  
Mankind—no fitter: was the Will Itself  
In fault?

His forehead pressed the moonlit shelf  
Beside the youngest marble maid awhile;  
Then, raising it, he thought, with a long smile,  
I shall be king again! as he withdrew  
The envied scarf; into the font he threw  
His crown.

Next day, no poet! Wherefore? asked  
Taurello, when the dance of Jongleurs masked  
As devils ended; don't a song come next?  
The master of the pageant looked perplexed  
Till Naddo's whisper came to his relief:  
His Highness knew what poets were: in brief,  
Had not the tetchy race prescriptive right  
To peevishness, caprice? or, call it spite,  
One must receive their nature in its length  
And breadth, expect the weakness with the strength!  
So phrasing, till, his stock of phrases spent,  
The easy-natured soldier smiled assent,  
Settled his portly person, smoothed his chin,  
And nodded that the bull-chase might begin.

# SORDELLO

## BOOK THE THIRD

AND the font took them: let our laurels lie!  
Braid moonfern now with mystic trifoly  
Because once more Goito gets, once more,  
Sordello to itself! A dream is o'er  
And the suspended life begins anew;  
Quiet those throbbing temples, then, subdue  
That cheek's distortion! Nature's strict embrace,  
Putting aside the past, shall soon efface  
Its print as well—factitious humours grown  
Over the true—loves, hatreds not his own—  
And turn him pure as some forgotten vest  
Woven of painted byssus, silkiest  
Tufting the Tyrrhene whelk's pearl-sheeted lip,  
Left welter where a trireme let it slip  
I' the sea and vexed a Satrap; so the stain  
O' the world forsakes Sordello with its pain  
Its pleasure: how the tinct loosening escapes  
Cloud after cloud! Mantua's familiar shapes  
Die, fair and foul die, fading as they flit,  
Men, women, and the pathos and the wit,  
Wise speech and foolish, deeds to smile or sigh  
For, good, bad, seemly or ignoble, die:  
The last face glances through the eglantines,  
The last voice murmurs 'twixt the blossomed vines  
This May of the Machine supplied by Thought  
To compass Self-perception idly sought  
By forcing half himself—an insane pulse  
Of a God's blood on clay it could convulse  
Never transmute—on human sights and sounds  
To watch the other half with; irksome bounds  
It ebbs from to its source, a fountain sealed  
Forever. Better sure be unrevealed  
Than part-revealed: Sordello well or ill  
Is finished with: what further use of Will?  
—Point in the prime idea not realised,

## SORDELLO

An oversight, inordinately prized  
No less, and pampered with enough of each  
Delight to prove the whole above its reach.  
To need become all natures yet retain  
The law of one's own nature—to remain  
Oneself, yet yearn . . . aha, that chesnut, think,  
To yearn for this first larch-bloom crisp and pink,  
With those pale fragrant tears where zephyrs staunch  
March wounds along the fretted pine-tree branch!  
Will and the means to show it, great and small  
Material, spiritual, abjure them all  
Save any so distinct as to be left  
Amuse, not tempt become: and, thus bereft,  
Say just as I am fashioned would I be!  
Nor, Moon, is it Apollo now but me  
Thou visitest to comfort and befriend;  
Swim thou into my heart and there an end  
Since I possess thee! nay thus shut mine eyes  
And know, quite know, by that heart's fall and rise  
If thou dost bury thee in clouds and when  
Out-standest: wherefore practise upon Men  
To make that plainer to myself?

Slide here  
Over a sweet and solitary year  
Wasted: or simply notice change in him—  
How eyes, bright with exploring once, grew dim  
And satiate with receiving. Some distress  
Occasioned, too, a sort of consciousness  
Under the imbecility; nought kept  
That down: he slept, but was aware he slept  
And frustrate so: as who brainsick made pact  
Erst with the overhanging cataract  
To deafen him, yet may distinguish now  
His own blood's measured clicking at his brow.

To finish. One declining Autumn day—  
Few birds about the heaven chill and grey,  
No wind that cared trouble the tacit woods—  
He sauntered home complacently, their moods  
According, his and Nature's. Every spark  
Of Mantua life was trodden out; so dark



## SORDELLO

The embers that the Troubadour who sung  
Hundreds of songs forgot, its trick the tongue,  
Its craft the brain, how either brought to pass  
Singing so e'er; that faculty might class  
With any of Apollo's now. The year  
Began to find its early promise sere  
As well. Thus beauty vanishes! Your stone  
Outlasts your flesh. Nature's and his youth gone,  
They left the world to you and wished you joy.  
When stopping his benevolent employ  
A presage shuddered through the welkin; harsh  
The earth's remonstrance followed. 'Twas the marsh  
Gone of a sudden. Mincio in its place  
Laughed a broad water in next morning's face  
And, where the mists broke up immense and white  
I' the steady wind, burnt like a spilth of light  
Out of the crashing of a myriad stars.  
And here was Nature, bound by the same bars  
Of fate with him!

No: youth once gone is gone:  
Deeds let escape are never to be done:  
Leaf-fall and grass-spring for the year, but us—  
Oh forfeit I unalterably thus  
My chance? nor two lives wait me, this to spend  
Learning save that? Nature has leisure mend  
Mistake, occasion, knows she, will recur—  
Landslip or seabreach how affects it her  
With her magnificent resources? I  
Must perish once and perish utterly!  
Not any strollings now at even-close  
Down the field-path, Sordello, by thorn-rows  
Alive with lamp-flies, swimming spots of fire  
And dew, outlining the black cypress's spire  
She waits you at, Elys, who heard you first  
Woo her the snow-month—ah, but ere she durst  
Answer 'twas April! Linden-flower-time-long  
Her eyes were on the ground; 'tis July, strong  
Now; and because white dust-clouds overwhelm  
The woodside, here or by the village elm  
That holds the moon she meets you, somewhat pale,

## SORDELLO

But letting you lift up her coarse flax veil  
And whisper (the damp little hand in yours)  
Of love—heart's love—your heart's love that endures  
Till death. Tush! No mad mixing with the rout  
Of haggard ribalds wandering about  
The hot torchlit wine-scented island-house  
Where Friedrich holds his wickedest carouse  
Parading to the gay Palermitans,  
Soft Messinese, dusk Saracenic clans  
From Nuocera, those tall grave dazzling Norse,  
Clear-cheeked, lank-haired, toothed whiter than the  
morse,

Queens of the caves of jet stalactites  
He sent his barks to fetch through icy seas,  
The blind night seas without a saving-star,  
And here in snowy birdskin robes they are,  
Sordello, here, mollitious alcoves gilt  
Superb as Byzant-domes that devils built  
—Ah, Byzant, there again! no chance to go  
Ever like august pleasant Dandolo,  
Worshipping hearts about him for a wall,  
Conducted, blind eyes, hundred years and all,  
Through vanquished Byzant to have noted him  
What pillar, marble massive, sardius slim,  
'Twere fittest we transport to Venice' Square—  
Flattered and promised life to touch them there  
Soon, by his fervid sons of senators!  
No more lives, deaths, loves, hatreds, peaces, wars--  
Ah, fragments of a Whole ordained to be!  
Points in the life I waited! what are ye  
But roundels of a ladder which appeared  
Awhile the very platform it was reared  
To lift me on—that Happiness I find  
Proofs of my faith in, even in the blind  
Instinct which bade forego you all unless  
Ye led me past yourselves? Ay, Happiness  
Awaited me; the way life should be used  
Was to acquire, and deeds like you conducted  
To teach it by a self-revelment (deemed  
That very use too long). Whatever seemed

## SORDELLO

Progress to that was Pleasure; aught that stayed  
My reaching it—No Pleasure. I have laid  
The roundels down; I climb not; still aloft  
The platform stretches! Bliss strong and soft  
I dared not entertain elude me; yet  
Never of what they promised could I get  
A glimpse till now! The common sort, the crowd,  
Exist, perceive; with Being are endowed,  
However slight, distinct from what they See,  
However bounded: Happiness must be  
To feed the first by gleanings from the last,  
Attain its qualities, and slow or fast  
Become what one beholds; such peace-in-strife  
By transmutation is the Use of Life,  
The Alien turning Native to the soul  
Or body—which instructs me; I am whole  
There and demand a Palma; had the world  
Been from my soul to a like distance hurled  
'Twere Happiness to make it one with me—  
Whereas I must, ere I begin to Be,  
Include a world, in flesh, I comprehend  
In spirit now; and this done, what's to blend  
With? Nought is Alien here—my Will  
Owns it already; yet can turn it still  
Less Native, since my Means to correspond  
With Will are so unworthy 'twas my bond  
To tread the very ones that tantalise  
Me now into a grave, never to rise—  
I die then! Will the rest agree to die?  
Next Age or no? Shall its Sordello try  
Clue after clue and catch at last the clue  
I miss, that's underneath my finger too,  
Twice, thrice a day, perhaps,—some yearning traced  
Deeper, some petty consequence embraced  
Closer! Why fled I Mantua then? Complained  
So much my Will was fettered, yet remained  
Content within a tether half the range  
I could assign it?—able to exchange  
My ignorance, I felt, for knowledge, and  
Idle because I could thus understand—

## SORDELLO

Could e'en have penetrated to its core  
Our mortal mystery, and yet forbore,  
Preferred elaborating in the dark  
My casual stuff, by any wretched spark  
Born of my predecessors, tho' one stroke  
Of mine had brought the flame forth! Mantua's yoke,  
My minstrel's-trade, was to behold mankind,  
And my own matter—just to bring my mind  
Behold, just extricate, for my acquist,  
Each object suffered stifle in the mist  
Convention, hazard, blindness could impose  
In their relation to myself.

He rose.

The level wind carried above the firs  
Clouds, the irrevocable travellers,  
Onward.

Pushed thus into a drowsy copse,  
Arms twine about my neck, each eyelid drops  
Under a humid finger; while there fleets  
Outside the screen a pageant time repeats  
Never again! To be deposed—immured  
Clandestinely—still petted, still assured  
To govern were fatiguing work—the Sight  
Fleeting meanwhile! 'Tis noontide—wreak ere night  
Somehow one's will upon it rather! Slake  
This thirst somehow, the poorest impress take  
That serves! A blasted bud displays you, torn,  
Faint rudiments of the full flower unborn;  
But who divines what petal coats o'erclasp  
Of the bulb dormant in the Mummy's grasp  
Taurello sent . . .

Taurello? Palma sent  
Your Trouvere, (Naddo interposing leant  
Over the lost bard's shoulder) and believe  
You cannot more reluctantly conceive  
Than I pronounce her message: we depart  
Together: what avail a poet's heart  
Verona and her gauds? five blades of grass  
Suffice him. News? Why, where your marish was,  
On its mud-banks smoke rises after smoke

## SORDELLO

I' the valley like a spout of hell new broke.  
Oh, the world's tidings! little thanks, I guess,  
For them. The father of our Patroness  
Playing Taurello an astounding trick  
Parts between Ecelin and Alberic  
His wealth and goes into a convent: both  
Wed Guelfs: the Count and Palma plighted troth  
A week since at Verona: and she wants  
You doubtless to contrive the marriage-chants  
Ere Richard storms Ferrara. Your response  
To Palma? Wherefore jest? Depart at once?  
A good resolve! In truth I hardly hoped  
So prompt an acquiescence. Have you groped  
Out wisdom in the wilds here?—Thoughts may be  
Over-poetical for poetry?  
Pearl-white you minstrels liken Palma's neck,  
And yet what spoils an orient like some speck  
Of genuine white turning its own white grey?  
You take me? Curse the cicales!

One more day—

One eve—appears Verona! Many a group,  
(You mind) instructed of the osprey's swoop  
On lynx and ounce, was gathering—Christendom  
Sure to receive, whate'er it might be, from  
The evening's purpose cheer or detriment  
Since Friedrich only waited some event  
Like this of Ghibellins establishing  
Themselves within Ferrara, ere, as King  
Of Lombardy, he'd glad descend there, wage  
Old warfare with the Pontiff, disengage  
His barons from the burghers, and restore  
The rule of Charlemagne broken of yore  
By Hildebrand. That eve-long each by each  
Sordello sate and Palma: little speech  
At first in that dim closet, face with face  
Despite the tumult in the market-place  
Exchanging quick low laughter: now would gush  
Word upon word to meet a sudden flush,  
A look left off, a shifting lips' surmise—  
But for the most part their two histories

## SORDELLO

Ran best thro' the locked fingers and linked arms.  
And so the night flew on with its alarms  
Till in burst one of Palma's retinue;  
Now Lady, gasped he. Then arose the two  
And leaned into Verona's air dead still.  
A balcony lay black beneath until  
Out 'mid a gush of torchfire, grey-haired men  
Came on it and harangued the people: then  
Sea-like that people surging to and fro  
Shouted, Hale forth the Carroch—trumpets, ho,  
A flourish! run it in the ancient grooves—  
Back from the bell! Hammer! that whom behooves  
May hear the League is up! Peal! learn who list  
Verona means not be the first break tryst  
To-morrow with the League.

Enough. Now turn—

Over the Eastern cypresses: discern  
You any beacon set a-glimmer?

Rang

The air with shouts that overpowered the clang  
Of the incessant carroch even. Haste—  
The Candle's at the gate-way! ere it waste  
Each soldier stands beside, armed fit to march  
With Tiso Sampier thro' that Eastern arch!  
Ferrara's succoured, Palma!

Once again

They sate together; some strange thing in train  
To say, so difficult was Palma's place  
In taking, with a coy fastidious grace  
Like the bird's flutter ere it fix and feed;  
But when she felt she held her friend indeed  
Safe, she threw back her curls, began implant  
Her lessons; telling of another want  
Goito's quiet nourished than his own;  
Palma—to serve, as him—be served, alone  
Importing; Agnes' milk so neutralised  
The blood of Ecelin. Nor be surprised  
If, while Sordello nature captive led,  
In dream was Palma wholly subjected  
To some out-soul which dawned not though she pined

## SORDELLO

Delaying still (pursued she) heart and mind  
To live : how dared I let expand the force  
Within me till some out-soul whose resource  
It grew for should direct it? Every law  
Of life, its fitnesses and every flaw,  
Must that determine whose corporeal shape  
Would be no other than the prime escape  
And revelation to me of a Will  
Orb-like o'ershrouded and inscrutable  
Above except the point I was to know,  
Shone that myself, my powers, might overflow  
So far, so much ; as now it signified  
Which earthly shape it henceforth chose to guide  
Me by, whose lip selected to declare  
Its oracles, what fleshly garb would wear :  
—The first of intimations, whom to love ;  
The next, how love him. And that orb, above  
The castle-covert and the mountain-close  
Slow in appearing, if beneath arose  
Cravings, aversions, and our green precinct  
Took pride in me at unawares distinct  
With this or that endowment, how repress,  
At once such jetting power shrunk to the rest!  
Was I to have a chance touch spoil me, leave  
My spirit thence unfitted to receive  
The consummating spell?—that spell so near  
Moreover : waits he not the waking year?  
His almond-blossoms must be honey-ripe  
By this ; to welcome him fresh runnels stripe  
The thawed ravines ; because of him the wind  
Walks like a herald. I shall surely find  
Him now !

And chief that earnest April morn  
Of Richard's Love-court was it time, so worn  
And white her cheek, so idly her blood beat,  
Sitting that morn beside the Lady's feet  
And saying as she prompted ; till outburst  
One face from all the faces—not then first  
She knew it ; where in maple-chamber glooms,  
Crowned with what sanguine-heart pomegranate blooms

## SORDELLO

Advanced it ever? Men's acknowledgment  
Sanctioned her own: 'twas taken, Palma's bent,  
She said.

And day by day the Tuscan dumb  
Sat scheming, scheming; Ecelin would come  
Gaunt, scared, Cesano baffles me, he'd say:  
Better I fought it out my father's way!  
Strangle Ferrara in its drowning flats  
And you and your Taurello yonder—what's  
Romano's business there? An hour's concern  
To cure the froward Chief! induced return  
Much heartened from those overmeaning eyes,  
Wound up to persevere, his enterprise  
Marked out anew, its exigent of wit  
Apportioned, she at liberty to sit  
And scheme against the next emergence, I—  
To covet what I deemed their sprite, made fly  
Or fold the wing—to con your horoscope  
For leave command those steely shafts shoot ope  
Or straight assuage their blinding eagerness  
To blank smooth snow: what semblance of success  
To any of my plans for making you  
Romano's lord? That chief—her Children too—  
There Salinguerra would obstruct me sheer,  
And the insuperable Tuscan here  
Stayed me! But one wild eve that Lady died  
In her lone chamber: only I beside:  
Taurello far at Naples, and my sire  
At Padua, Ecelin away in ire  
With Alberic: she held me thus—a clutch  
To make our spirits as our bodies touch—  
And so began flinging the past up, heaps  
Of uncouth treasure from their sunless sleeps  
Within her soul; deeds rose along with dreams,  
Fragments of many miserable schemes,  
Secrets, more secrets, then—no, not the last—  
'Mongst others, like a casual trick o' the past,  
How . . . ay, she told me, gathering her face  
That face of hers into one arch-grimace  
To die with . . .



## SORDELLO

Friend, 'tis gone! but not the fear  
Of that fell laughing, heard as now I hear.  
Nor faltered voice, nor seemed her heart grow weak,  
When i' the midst abrupt she ceased to speak  
—Dead, as to serve a purpose, mark, for in  
Rushed o' the very instant Ecelin  
(How summoned who divines?) looking as if  
Part understood he why his mate lay stiff  
Already in my arms for, Girl, how must  
I manage Este in the matter thrust  
Upon me, how unravel their bad coil?  
Since (he declared) 'tis on your brow—a soil  
Like hers there! then said in a breath he lacked  
No counsel after all, had signed no pact  
With devils, nor was treason here or there,  
Goito or Vicenza, his affair:  
He'd bury it in Adelaide's deep grave  
And begin life afresh, nor either, slave  
For any Friedrich's or Taurello's sake!  
What booted him to meddle or to make  
In Lombardy? 'Twas afterward I knew  
The meaning of his promise to undo  
All she had done—why marriages were made,  
New friendships entered on, old followers paid  
In curses for their pains, people's amaze  
At height, when passing out by Gate St. Blaise  
He stopped short in Vicenza, bent his head  
Over a friar's neck, had vowed, he said,  
Long since, nigh thirty years, because his wife  
And child were saved there, to bestow his life  
On God, his gettings on the Church.

### Exiled

Within Goito, still that dream beguiled  
Her days and nights; 'twas found the orb she  
sought  
To serve, those glimpses came of Fomalhaut  
No other: how then serve it?—authorise  
Him and Romano mingle destinies?  
And straight Romano's angel stood beside  
Her who had else been Boniface's bride,

## SORDELLO

For Salinguerra 'twas, the neck low bent,  
The voice lightened to music as he meant  
To learn not teach me how Romano waxed,  
Wherefore he waned, and why if I relaxed  
My grasp (think, I!) would drop a thing effete,  
Frayed by itself, unequal to complete  
The course, and counting every step astray  
A gain so much. Romano every way  
Stable, a House now—why this starting back  
Into the very outset of its track?  
This recent patching-principle allied  
Our House with other Houses—what beside  
Concerned the apparition, yon grim Knight  
Who followed Conrad hither in such plight  
His utmost wealth was reckoned in his steed?  
For Ecelo, that prowler, was decreed  
A task in the beginning hazardous  
To him as ever task can be to us,  
But did the weather-beaten thief despair  
When first our crystal cincture of warm air,  
That binds the Trivisan as its spice-belt  
(Crusaders say) the tract where Jesus dwelt,  
Furtive he pierced and Este was to face—  
Despaired Saponian Strength of Lombard Grace?  
Said he for making surer aught made sure,  
Maturing what already was mature?  
No; his heart prompted Ecelo, Confront  
Este, inspect yourself. What's nature? Wont.  
Discard three-parts your nature and adopt  
The rest as an advantage! Old Strength propped  
The earliest of Podestas among  
The Vincentines, no less than, while there sprung  
His Palace up in Padua like a threat,  
Their noblest spied a Grace unnoticed yet  
In Conrad's crew. Thus far the object gained,  
Romano was established; has remained—  
For are you not Italian, truly peer  
With Este? Azzo better soothes its\* ear  
Than Alberic? or is this lion's-crine

\* [Sic.]

## SORDELLO

From over-mount (this yellow hair of mine)  
So weak a graft on Agnes Este's stock?  
(Thus went he on with something of a mock)  
Wherefore recoil then from the very fate  
Conceded you, refuse to imitate  
Your model farther? Este long since left  
Being mere Este : as a blade its heft,  
Este requires the Pope to further him :  
And you, the Kaiser : whom your father's whim  
Forgoes or, better, never shall forego  
If Palma dares pursue what Ecelo  
Commenced but Ecelin desists from : just  
As Adelaide of Susa could intrust  
Her donative (that's Piedmont to the Pope,  
The Alpine-pass for him to shut or ope  
'Twixt France and Italy) to the superb  
Matilda's perfecting,—lest aught disturb  
Our Adelaide's great counter-project for  
Giving her Trentine to the Emperor  
And passage here from Germany, shall you  
Take it, my slender plodding talent, too—  
Urged me Taurello with his half-smile.

He

As Patron of the scattered family  
Conveyed me to his Mantua, kept in bruit  
Azzo's alliances and Richard's suit  
Until, the Kaiser excommunicate,  
Nothing remains, Taurello said, but wait  
Some rash procedure : Palma was the link,  
As Agnes' child, between us, and they shrink  
From losing Palma : judge if we advance  
Your father's method your inheritance !  
The day she was betrothed to Boniface  
At Padua by Taurello's self, took place  
The outrage of the Ferrarese : again,  
That day she sought Verona with the train  
Agreed for, by Taurello's policy  
Convicting Richard of the fault, since she  
Was present to annul or to confirm,  
Richard, whose patience had outstayed its term,

## SORDELLO

Quitted Verona for the siege.

And now

What glory may engird Sordello's brow  
For this? A month since Oliero sunk  
All Ecelin that was into a Monk;  
But how could Salinguerra so forget  
His liege of thirty summers as grudge yet  
One effort to recover him? He sent  
Forthwith the tidings of the Town's event  
To Oliero, adding, he, despite  
The recent folly, recognised his right  
To order such proceedings: should he wring  
Its uttermost advantage out, or fling  
This chance away? If not him, who was Head  
Now of the House? Through me that missive sped;  
My father's answer will by me return.  
Behold! For him, he writes, no more concern  
With strife than for his children with the plots  
Of Friedrich. Old engagements out he blots  
For aye: Taurello shall no more subserve,  
Nor Ecelin impose. Lest this unnerve  
Him therefore at this juncture, slack his grip  
Of Richard, suffer the occasion slip,  
I, in his sons' default (who, mating with  
Este, forsake Romano as the frith  
Its mainsea for the firmland that makes head  
Against) I stand, Romano; in their stead  
Assume the station they desert, and give  
Still, as the Kaiser's Representative,  
Taurello licence he demands. Midnight—  
Morning—by noon to-morrow, making light  
Of the League's issue, we, in some gay weed  
Like yours disguised together, may precede  
The arbitrators to Ferrara; reach  
Him, let Taurello's noble accents teach  
The rest! then say if I have misconceived  
Your destiny, too readily believed  
The Kaiser's cause your own!

And Palma's fled.

Though no affirmative disturbs the head

## SORDELLO

A dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er  
Like the alighted planet Pollux wore,  
Until, morn breaking, he resolves to be  
Gate-vein of this heart's blood of Lombardy,  
Soul to their body—have their aggregate  
Of souls and bodies, and so conquer fate  
Though he should live, a centre of disgust  
Even, apart, core of the outward crust  
He vivifies, assimilates. For thus  
Bring I Sordello to the rapturous  
Exclaim at the crowd's cry, because one round  
Of life was quite accomplished and he found  
Not only that a soul, howe'er its might,  
Is insufficient to its own delight,  
Both in corporeal organs and in skill  
By means of such to body forth its Will—  
And, after, insufficient to apprise  
Men of that Will, oblige them recognise  
The Hid by the Revealed—but that, the last  
Nor lightest of the struggles overpast,  
His Will, bade abdicate, which would not void  
The throne, might sit there, suffer he enjoyed  
The same a varied and divine array  
Incapable of homage the first way  
Nor fit to render incidentally  
Tribute connived at, taken by the by,  
In joys: and if thus warranted rescind  
The ignominious exile of mankind  
Whose proper service, ascertained intact  
As yet (by Him to be themselves made act,  
Not watch Sordello acting each of them)  
Was to secure—if the true diadem  
Seemed imminent while our Sordello drank  
The wisdom of that golden Palma, thank  
Verona's Lady in her Citadel  
Founded by Gaulish Brennus legends tell—  
And truly when she left him the sun reared  
A head like the first clamberer's that peered  
A-top the Capitol, his face on flame  
With triumph, triumphing till Manlius came.

## SORDELLO

Nor slight too much my rhymes—"that spring, dispread,  
Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead  
Like an escape of angels?" Rather say  
My transcendental platan! mounting gay  
(An archimage so courts a novice-queen)  
With tremulous silvered trunk, whence branches  
sheen

Laugh out, thick foliaged next, a-shiver soon  
With coloured buds, then glowing like the moon  
One mild flame, last a pause, a burst, and all  
Her ivory limbs are smothered by a fall,  
Bloom-flinders and fruit-sparkles and leaf-dust,  
Ending the weird work prosecuted just  
For her amusement; he decrepit, stark,  
Dozes; her uncontrolled delight may mark  
Apart—

Yet not so, surely never so!  
Only as good my soul were suffered go  
O'er the lagune: forth fare thee, put aside  
Entrance thy synod, as a God may glide  
Out of the world he fills and leave it mute  
A myriad ages as we men compute,  
Returning into it without a break  
I' the consciousness! They sleep, and I awake  
O'er the lagune.

Sordello said once, note  
In just such songs as Eglamor, say, wrote  
With heart and soul and strength, for he believed  
Himself achieving all to be achieved  
By singer—in such songs you find alone  
Completeness, judge the song and singer One  
And either's purpose answered, his in it  
Or its in him: while from true works (to wit  
Sordello's dream-performances that will  
Be never more than dream) escapes there still  
Some proof the singer's proper life's beneath  
The life his song exhibits, this a sheath  
To that; a passion and a knowledge far  
Transcending these, majestic as they are,  
Smoulder; his lay was but an episode

## SORDELLO

In the bard's life. Which evidence you owed  
To some slight weariness, a looking-off  
Or start-away, the childish skit or scoff  
In "Charlemagne," for instance, dreamed divine  
In every point except one restive line  
(Those daughters!)—what significance may lurk  
In that? My life commenced before that work,  
Continues after it, as on I fare  
With no more stopping possibly, no care  
To jot down (says the bard) the why and how  
And where and when of life, as I do now:  
But shall I cease to live for that? Alas  
For you! who sigh, when shall it come to pass  
We read that story, when will he compress  
The future years, his whole life's business,  
Into another lay which that one flout,  
Howe'er inopportune it be, lets out  
Engrosses him already while professed  
To meditate with us eternal rest?  
Strike sail! slip cable! here the galley's moored  
For once, the awning's stretched, the poles assured;  
Noontide above; except the wave's crisp dash,  
Or buzz of colibri, or tortoise' splash,  
The margin's silent; out with every spoil  
Made in our tracking, coil by mighty coil,  
This serpent of a river to his head  
P' the midst! Admire each treasure as we spread  
The turf to help us tell our history  
Arigh: give ear then, gentles, and descry  
The groves of giant rushes how they grew  
Like demon's endlong tresses we sailed through,  
How mountains yawned, forests to give us vent  
Opened, each doleful side, yet on we went  
Till . . . may that beetle (shake your cap) attest  
The springing of a land-wind from the West!  
Wherefore? Ah yes, you frolic it to-day:  
To-morrow, and the pageant's moved away  
Down to the poorest tent-pole: we and you  
Part company: no other may pursue  
Eastward your voyage, be informed what fate

## SORDELLO

Intends, if triumph or decline await  
The tempter of the everlasting steppe.

I sung this on an empty palace-step  
At Venice: why should I break off, nor sit  
Longer upon my step, exhaust the fit  
England gave birth to? Who's adorable  
Enough reclaim a — no Sordello's Will  
Alack!—be queen to me? That Bassanese  
Busied among her smoking fruit-boats? These  
Perhaps from our delicious Asolo  
Who twinkle, pigeons o'er the portico  
Not prettier, bind late lilies into sheaves  
To deck the bridge-side chapel, dropping leaves  
Soiled by their own loose gold-meal? Ah, beneath  
The cool arch stoops she, brownest-cheek! Her  
wreath

Endures a month—a half-month—if I make  
A queen of her, continue for her sake  
Sordello's story? Nay, that Paduan girl  
Splashes with barer legs where a live whirl  
In the dead black Giudecca proves sea-weed  
Drifting has sucked down three, four, all indeed  
Save one pale-red striped, pale-blue turbaned post  
For gondolas.

You sad dishevelled ghost  
That pluck at me and point, are you advised  
I breathe? Let stay those girls (e'en her disguised  
—Jewels in the locks that love no crownnet like  
Their native field-buds and the green wheat spike,  
So fair!—Who left this end of June's turmoil,  
Shook off, as might a lily its gold soil,  
Pomp, save a foolish gem or two, and free  
Came join the peasants o'er the kissing sea.)  
Look they too happy, too tricked out? Confess  
You have so niggard stock of happiness  
To share that, do one's uttermost, dear wretch,  
One labours ineffectually stretch  
It o'er you so that mother, children, both  
May equitably flaunt the sumpter-cloth!  
No: tear the robe yet farther: be content



## SORDELLO

With seeing some few score pre-eminent  
Through shreds of it, acknowledged happy wights,  
Engrossing what should furnish all, by rights--  
(At home we dizen scholars, chiefs and kings,  
But in this magic weather hardly clings  
The old garb gracefully : Venice, a type  
Of Life, 'twixt blue and blue extends, a stripe,  
As Life, the somewhat, hangs 'twixt nought and  
nought :

'Tis Venice, and 'tis Life—as good you sought  
To spare me the Piazza's slippery stone,  
Or stay me thrid her cross canals alone,  
As hinder Life what seems the single good  
Sole purpose, one thing to be understood  
Of Life)—best, be they Peasants, be they Queens,  
Take them, I say, made happy any means,  
Parade them for the common credit, vouch  
A luckless residue we send to crouch  
In corners out of sight was just as framed  
For happiness, its portion might have claimed  
And so, could we concede that portion stalked  
Fastuous as any—such my project, baulked  
Already; hardly venture I adjust  
A lappet when I find you! To mistrust  
Me! nor unreasonably. You, no doubt,  
Have the true knack of tiring suitors out  
With those thin lips on tremble, lashless eyes  
Inveterately tear-shot—there, be wise  
Mistress of mine, there, there, as if I meant  
You insult! Shall your friend (not slave) be shent  
For speaking home? Beside care-bit erased  
Broken-up beauties ever took my taste  
Supremely, and I love you more, far more  
Than her I looked should foot Life's temple-floor--  
Years ago, leagues at distance, when and where  
A whisper came, Seek others, since thy care  
Is found, a life's provision; if a race  
Should be thy mistress, and into one face  
The many faces crowd? Ah, had I, judge,  
Or no, your secret? Rough apparel—grudge

## SORDELLO

All ornaments save tag or tassel worn  
To hint we are not thoroughly forlorn—  
Slouch bonnet, unloop mantle, careless go  
Alone (that's saddest but it must be so)  
Through Venice, sing now and now glance aside,  
Aught desultory or undignified,  
And, ravishingest lady, will you pass  
Or not each formidable group, the mass  
Before the Basilike (that feast gone by,  
God's day, the great June Corpus Domini)  
And wistfully foregoing proper men,  
Come timid up to me for alms? And then  
The luxury to hesitate, feign do  
Some unexampled grace, when whom but you  
Dare I bestow your own upon? And hear  
Me out before you say it is to sneer  
I call you ravishing, for I regret  
Little that she, whose early foot was set  
Forth as she'd plant it on a pedestal,  
Now i' the silent city, seems to fall  
Towards me—no wreath, only a lip's unrest  
To quiet, surcharged eyelids to be pressed  
Dry of their tears upon my bosom: strange  
Such sad chance should produce in thee such change  
My love! warped men, souls, bodies! yet God spoke  
Of right-hand foot and eye—selects our yoke  
Sordello! as your poetship may find:  
So sleep upon my shoulder, child, nor mind  
Their foolish talk; we'll manage reinstate  
The matter; ask moreover, when they prate  
Of evil men past hope, don't each contrive  
Despite the evil you abuse to live?  
Keeping, each losel, thro' a maze of lies,  
His own conceit of truth? to which he hies  
By obscure tortuous windings, if you will,  
But to himself not inaccessible;  
He sees it, and his lies are for the crowd  
We cannot see; some fancied right allowed  
His vilest wrong, empowered the fellow clutch  
One pleasure from the multitude of such

## SORDELLO

Denied him : then assert, all men appear  
To think all better than themselves, by here  
Trusting a crowd they wrong ; but really, say,  
All men think all men stupider than they,  
Since save themselves no other comprehends  
The complicated scheme to make amends  
—Evil, the scheme by which, thro' Ignorance  
Good labours to exist. A slight advance  
Merely to find the sickness you die through  
And nought beside : but if one cant eschew  
One's portion in the common lot, at least  
One can avoid an ignorance increased  
Tenfold by dealing out hint after hint  
How nought is like dispensing without stint  
The water of life—so easy to dispense  
Beside, when one has probed the centre whence  
Commotion's born—could tell you of it all  
—Meantime, just meditate my madrigal  
O' the mugwort that conceals a dewdrop safe!  
What, dullard ? we and you in smothery chafe  
Babes, baldheads, stumbled thus far into Zin  
The Horrid, getting neither out nor in,  
A hungry sun above us, sands among  
Our throats, each dromedary lolls a tongue,  
Each camel churns a sick and frothy chap,  
And you, 'twixt tales of Potiphar's mishap  
And sonnets on the earliest ass that spoke,  
Remark you wonder any one needs choak  
With founts about ! Potsherd him, Gibeonites,  
While awkwardly enough your Moses smites  
The rock though he forego his Promised Land,  
Thereby, have Satan claim his carcass, and  
Dance, forsooth, Metaphysic Poet . . . ah  
Mark ye the dim first oozings ? Meribah !  
And quaffing at the fount my courage gained  
Recall—not that I prompt ye—who explained . . .  
Presumptuous ! interrupts one. You not I  
'Tis Brother, marvel at and magnify  
Mine office : office, quotha ? can we get  
To the beginning of the office yet ?

## SORDELLO

What do we here ? simply experiment  
Each on the other's power and its intent  
When elsewhere tasked, if this of mine were trucked  
For thine to either's profit,—watch construct,  
In short, an engine: with a finished one  
What it can do is all, nought how 'tis done;  
But this of ours yet in probation, dusk  
A kernel of strange wheelwork thro' its husk  
Grows into shape by quarters and by halves;  
Remark this tooth's spring, wonder what that valve's  
Fall bodes, presume each faculty's device,  
Make out each other more or less precise—  
The scope of the whole engine's to be proved—  
We die: which means to say the whole's removed,  
Dismounted wheel by wheel that complex gin,  
To be set up anew elsewhere, begin  
A task indeed but with a clearer clime  
Than the murk lodgment of our building-time:  
And then, I grant you, it behoves forget  
How 'tis done—all that must amuse us yet  
So long: and while thou turnest on thy heel  
Pray that I be not busy slitting steel  
Or shredding brass upon a virgin shore  
Under a cluster of fresh stars, before  
I name a tithe the wheels I trust to do!  
So occupied, then, are we: hitherto,  
At present, and a weary while to come,  
The office of ourselves nor blind nor dumb  
And seeing somewhat of man's state, has been,  
The worst of us, to say they so have seen;  
The better, what it was they saw; the best,  
Impart the gift of seeing to the rest:  
So that I glance, says such an one, around,  
And there's no face but I can read profound  
Disclosures in; this stands for hope, that—fear,  
And for a speech, a deed in proof, look here!  
Stoop, else the strings of blossom, where the nuts  
O'erarch, will blind thee! said I not? she shuts  
Both eyes this time, so close the hazels meet!  
Thus, prisoned in the Piombi, I repeat

## SORDELLO

Events one rove occasioned, o'er and o'er,  
Putting 'twixt me and madness evermore  
Thy sweet shape, Elys! therefore stoop—

That's truth!

(Applaud you) the incarcerated youth  
Would say that!

Youth? Plara the bard? set down  
That Plara spent his youth in a grim town  
Whose cramped ill-featured streets huddled about  
The minster for protection, never out  
Of its black belfry's shadow or bells' roar:  
Brighter the sun illumed the suburbs, more  
Ugly and absolute that shade's reproof  
For any chance escape of joy some roof  
Taller than they allowed the rest detect  
Before the sole permitted laugh (suspect  
Who could, 'twas meant for laughter, that ploughed  
cheek's

Repulsive gleam!) when the sun stopped both peaks  
Of the cleft belfry like a fiery wedge,  
Then sunk, a huge flame on its socket's edge,  
Whose leavings on the grey grass oriel-pane,  
Were ghastly some few minutes more: no rain—  
The Minster minded that! in heaps the dust  
Lay every where: that town, the Minster's trust,  
Held Plara; who, its denizen, bade hail  
In twice twelve sonnets, Naddo Tempe's vale.

Exact the town, the minster and the street!

As all mirth triumphs, sadness means defeat:  
Lust triumphs and is gay, Love's triumphed o'er  
And sad: but Lucio's sad: I said before  
Love's sad, not Lucio; one who loves may be  
As gay his love has leave to hope, as he  
Downcast that lusts' desire escapes the springe:  
'Tis of the mood itself I speak, what tinge  
Determines it, else colourless, or mirth,  
Or melancholy, as from Heaven or Earth.

Ay, that's the variation's gist! Indeed?  
Thus far advanced in safety then, proceed!  
And having seen too what I saw, be bold

## SORDELLO

Enough encounter what I do behold  
(That's sure) but you must take on trust! Attack  
The use and purpose of such sights! Alack,  
Not so unwisely hastes the crowd dispense  
On Salinguerras praise in preference  
To the Sordellos: men of action these!  
Who seeing just as little as you please  
Yet turn that little to account; engage  
With, do not gaze at; carry on a stage  
The work o' the world, not merely make report  
The work existed ere their time—In short,  
When at some future no-time a brave band  
Sees, using what it sees, then shake my hand  
In heaven, my brother! Meanwhile where's the hurt  
To keep the Makers-see on the alert  
At whose defection mortals stare aghast  
As though Heaven's bounteous windows were slammed  
fast

Incontinent? whereas all you beneath  
Should scowl at, curse them, bruise lips, break their  
teeth

Who ply the pullies for neglecting you:  
And therefore have I moulded, made anew  
A Man, delivered to be turned and tried,  
Be angry with or pleased at. On your side  
Have ye times, places, actors of your own?  
Try them upon Sordello once full-grown,  
And then—ah then! If Hercules first parched  
His foot in Egypt only to be marched  
A sacrifice for Jove with pomp to suit,  
What chance have I? The demigod was mute  
Till at the altar, where time out of mind  
Such guests became oblations, chaplets twined  
His forehead long enough, and he began  
Slaying the slayers, nor escaped a man—  
Take not affront, my gentle audience! whom  
No Hercules shall make his hecatomb  
Believe, none from his brows your chaplet rend—  
That's your kind suffrage, yours, nay, yours, my friend  
Whose great verse blares unintermittent on

## SORDELLO

Like any trumpeter at Marathon,  
He'll testify who when Plataeas grew scant  
Put up with Ætna for a stimulant!  
And well too, I acknowledged, as it loomed  
Over the Midland sea that morn, presumed  
All day, demolished by the blazing West  
At eve, while towards it tilting cloudlets prest  
Like Persian ships for Salamis. Friend, wear  
A crest proud as desert while I declare  
Had I a flawless ruby fit to wring  
A tear its colour from that painted king  
To lose, I would, for that one smile which went  
To my heart, fling it in the sea content  
Wearing your verse in place, an amulet  
Sovereign against low-thoughtedness and fret!  
My English Eyebright, if you are not glad  
That, as I stopped my task awhile, the sad  
Dishevelled form wherein I put mankind  
To come at times and keep my pact in mind  
Renewed me,—hear no crickets in the hedge  
Nor let a glowworm spot the river's edge  
At home, and may the summer showers gush  
Without a warning from the missel thrush!  
For, Eyebright, what I sing's the fate of such  
As find our common nature (overmuch  
Despised because restricted and unfit  
To bear the burthen they impose on it)  
Oling when they would discard it; craving strength  
To leap from the allotted world, at length  
'Tis left—they floundering without a term  
Each a God's germ, but doomed remain a germ  
In unexpanded infancy, assure  
Yourself, nor misconceive my portraiture  
Nor undervalue its adornments quaint!  
What seems a fiend perchance may prove a saint:  
Ponder a story ancient pens transmit,  
Then say if you condemn me or acquit.  
John the Beloved, banished Antioch  
For Patmos, bade collectively his flock  
Farewell but set apart the closing eve



## SORDELLO

To comfort some his exile most would grieve  
He knew : a touching spectacle, that house  
In motion to receive him ! Xanthus' spouse  
You missed, made panther's meat a month since ; but  
Xanthus himself (for 'twas his nephew shut  
'Twixt boards and sawn asunder) Polycarp,  
Soft Charicle next year no wheel could warp  
To swear by Cæsar's fortune, with the rest  
Were ranged ; thro' whom the grey disciple prest  
Busily blessing right and left, just stopt  
To pat one infant's curls the hangman cropt  
Soon after, reached the portal ; on its hinge  
The door turns and he enters—what deep twinge  
Ruins the smiling mouth, those wide eyes fix  
Whereon ? How like some spectral candlestick's  
Branch the disciple's arms ! Dead swooned he, woke  
Anon, heaved sigh, made shift to gasp heart-broke  
Get thee behind me Satan ! have I toiled  
To no more purpose ? is the gospel foiled  
Here too, and o'er my son's, my Xanthus' hearth,  
Portrayed with sooty garb and features swarth—  
Ah Xanthus, am I to thy roof beguiled  
To see the—the—the Devil domiciled ?  
Whereto sobbed Xanthus, Father, 'tis yourself  
Installed, a limning which our utmost pelf  
Went to procure against to-morrow's loss,  
And that's no twy-prong but a pastoral cross  
You're painted with ! The puckered brows unfold—  
And you shall hear Sordello's story told.

## BOOK THE FOURTH

MEANTIME Ferrara lay in rueful case ;  
The lady-city, for whose sole embrace  
Her pair of suitors struggled, felt their arms  
A brawny mischief to the fragile charms  
Each tugged for—one discovering to twist



## SORDELLO

Her tresses twice or thrice about his wrist  
Secured a point of vantage—one, how best  
He'd parry that by planting in her breast  
His elbow-spike—both parties too intent  
For noticing, howe'er the battle went,  
Its conqueror would have a corpse to kiss.  
May Boniface be duly damned for this!  
Howled some old Ghibellin as up he turned,  
From the wet heap of rubbish where they burned  
His house, a little skull with dazzling teeth :  
A boon, sweet Christ—let Salinguerra seethe  
In hell for ever, Christ, and let myself  
Be there to laugh at him! moaned some young Guelf  
Stumbling upon a shrivelled hand nailed fast  
To the charred lintel of the doorway last  
His father stood within to bid him speed.  
The thoroughfares were overrun with weed  
—Docks, quitchgrass, loathly mallows no man plants.

The stranger none of its inhabitants  
Crept out of doors to taste fresh air again,  
And ask the purpose of a sumptuous train  
Admitted on a morning ; every town  
Of the East League was come by envoy down  
To treat for Richard's ransom : here you saw  
The Vicentine, here snowy oxen draw  
The Paduan carroch, its vermilion cross  
On its white field : a tip-toe o'er the fosse  
Looked Legate Montelungo wistfully  
After the flock of steeples he might spy  
In Este's time, gone (doubts he) long ago  
To mend the ramparts—sure the laggards know  
The Pope's as good as here ! They paced the streets  
More soberly. At last, Taurello greets  
The League, announced a pursuivant, will match  
Its courtesy, and labours to despatch  
At earliest Tito, Friedrich's Pretor, sent  
On pressing matters from his post at Trent  
With Mainard Count of Tyrol,—simply waits  
Their going to receive the delegates.  
Tito! Our delegates exchanged a glance,

## SORDELLO

And, keeping the main way, admired askance  
The lazy engines of outlandish birth  
Couched like a king each on its bank of earth—  
Arbalist, manganel and catapult;  
While stationed by, as waiting a result,  
Lean silent gangs of mercenaries ceased  
Working to watch the strangers—this, at least,  
Were better spared; he scarce presumes gainsay  
The League's decision! Get our friend away  
And profit for the future: how else teach  
Azzo 'tis not so safe within claw's reach  
Till Salinguerra's final gasp be blown?  
Those mere convulsive scratches find the bone  
—Who bade him bloody the spent osprey's nare?

The carrochs halted in the public square.  
Pennons of every blazon once a-flaunt,  
Men prattled, freelier than the crested gaunt  
White ostrich with a horse-shoe in her beak  
Was missing; whosoever chose might speak  
*Ecelin* boldly out: so, *Ecelin*  
Needed his wife to swallow half the sin  
And sickens by himself: the devil's whelp  
He styles his son dwindles away, no help  
From conserves, your fine triple-curved froth  
Of virgin's blood, your Venice viper-broth—  
Eh? Jubilate! Tush! no little word  
You utter here that's not distinctly heard  
At Oliero: he was absent sick  
When we besieged Bassano—who i' the thick  
O' the work perceived the progress Azzo made  
Like *Ecelin*? through his witch *Adelaide*  
Who managed it so well that night by night  
At their bed-foot stood up a soldier-sprite  
First fresh, pale by-and-by without a wound,  
And when he came with eyes filmed as in swoond  
They knew the place was taken—Ominous  
Your Ghibellins should get what cautelous  
Old Redbeard sought from Azzo's sire to wrench  
Vainly; St. George contrived his town a trench  
O' the marshes, an impermeable bar:

## SORDELLO

Young Ecelin is meant the tutelar  
Of Padua rather; veins embrace upon  
His hand like Brenta and Bacchiglion . . .  
What now? The founts! God's bread, touch not a  
plank!

A crawling hell of carrion—every tank  
Choke-full! found out just now to Cino's cost—  
The same who gave Taurello's side for lost,  
And, making no account of fortune's freaks,  
Refused to budge from Padua then, but sneaks  
Back now with Concorezzi—'faith! they drag  
Their carroch to San Vital, plant the flag  
On his own Palace so adroitly razed  
He knew it not; a sort of Guelf folk gazed  
And laughed apart; Cino disliked their air—  
Must pluck up spirit, show he does not care—  
Seats himself on the tank's edge—will begin  
To hum, *za za, Cavalier Ecelin*—  
A silence; he gets warmer, clinks to chime,  
Now both feet plough the ground, deeper each time,  
At last, *za za*, and up with a fierce kick  
Comes his own mother's face caught by the thick  
Grey hair about his spur!

Which means, they lift  
The covering Taurello made a shift  
To stretch upon the truth; as well avoid  
Further disclosures; leave them thus employed.  
Our dropping Autumn morning clears apace,  
And poor Ferrara puts a softened face  
On her misfortunes, save one spot—this tall  
Huge foursquare line of red brick garden-wall  
Bastioned within by trees of every sort  
On three sides, slender, spreading, long and short,  
(Each grew as it contrived, the poplar ramped,  
The fig-tree reared itself,) but stark and cramped,  
Made fools of; whence upon the very edge,  
Running 'twixt trunk and trunk to smooth one ledge  
Of shade, are shrubs inserted, warp and woof,  
Which smother up that variance. Scale the roof  
Of solid tops and o'er the slope you slide

## SORDELLO

Down to a grassy space level and wide,  
Here and there dotted with a tree, but trees  
Of rarer leaf, each foreigner at ease,  
Set by itself; and in the centre spreads,  
Born upon three uneasy leopards' heads,  
A laver, broad and shallow, one bright spirt  
Of water bubbles in: the walls begirt  
With trees leave off on either hand: pursue  
Your path along a wondrous avenue  
Those walls abut on, heaped of gleamy stone,  
With aloes leering everywhere, grey-grown  
From many a Moorish summer; how they wind  
Out of the fissures! likelier to bind  
The building than those rusted cramps which drop  
Already in the eating sunshine. Stop  
Yon fleeting shapes above there! Ah, the pride  
Or else despair of the whole country-side—  
A range of statues, swarming o'er with wasps,  
God, goddess, woman, man, your Greek rough-rasps  
In crumbling Naples marble! meant to look  
Like those Messina marbles Constance took  
Delight in, or Taurello's self conveyed  
To Mantua for his mistress, Adelaide,  
A certain font with caryatides  
Since cloistered at Goito; only, these  
Are up and doing, not abashed, a troop  
Able to right themselves—who see you, stoop  
O' the instant after you their arms! unplucked  
By this or that you pass, for they conduct  
To terrace raised on terrace, and, between,  
Creatures of brighter mould and braver mien  
Than any yet, the choicest of the Isle  
No doubt; here, left a sullen breathing-while,  
Up-gathered on himself the Fighter stood  
For his last fight, and, wiping treacherous blood  
Out of the eyelids just held ope beneath  
Those shading fingers in their iron sheath,  
Steadied his strengths amid the buz and stir  
Of a dusk hideous amphitheatre  
At the announcement of his over-match

## SORDELLO

To wind the day's diversion up, despatch  
Their pertinacious friend : while, limbs one heap,  
The Slave, no breath in her round mouth, watched  
    leap

Dart after dart forth as her hero's car  
Clove dizzily the solid of the war  
—Let coil about his knees for pride in him.  
We reach the farthest terrace and the grim  
San Pietro Palace stops us.

Such the state

Of Salinguerra's plan to emulate  
Sicilian marvels that his girlish wife  
Retrude still might lead her ancient life  
In her new home—whereat enlarged so much  
Neighbours upon the novel princely touch  
He took who here imprisons Boniface.  
Here must the Envoys come to sue for grace ;  
And here, emerging from the labyrinth  
Below, two minstrels pause beside the plinth  
Of the door-pillar.

One had really left

Verona for the cornfields (a poor theft  
From the morass) where Este's camp was made,  
The Envoys' march, the Legate's cavalcade—  
Looked cursorily o'er, but scarce as when,  
Eager for cause to stand aloof from men  
At every point save the fantastic tie  
Acknowledged in his boyish sophistry,  
He made account of such. A crowd ; he meant  
To task the whole of it ; each part's intent  
Concerned him therefore, and the more he pried  
The less became Sordello satisfied :  
With his own figure at the moment. Sought  
He respite from his task ? descried he aught  
Novel in the anticipated sight  
Of all those livers upon all delight ?  
A phalanx as of myriad points combined  
Whereby he still had imaged that mankind  
His youth was passed in dreams of rivalling,  
His age—in plans to show at least the thing

## SORDELLO

So dreamed, but now he hastened to impress  
With his own will, effect a happiness  
From theirs, supply a body to his soul  
Thence, and become eventually whole  
With them as he had hoped to be without—  
Made these the mankind he was mad about?  
Because a few of them were notable  
Must all be figured worthy note? As well  
Expect to find Taurello's triple line  
Of trees a single and prodigious pine.  
Real pines rose here and there, but, close among,  
Thrust into and mixed up with pines, a throng  
Of shrubs you saw, a nameless common sort  
O'erpast in dreams, left out of the report,  
Fast hurried into corners, or at best  
Admitted to be fancied like the rest.  
Reckon that morning's proper chiefs; how few!  
And yet the people grew, the people grew,  
Grew ever, as with many there indeed,  
More left behind and most who should succeed  
Simply in virtue of their faces, eyes,  
Petty enjoyments and huge miseries,  
Were veritably mingled with, made great  
Those chiefs: no overlooking Mainard's state  
Nor Concorezzi's station, but instead  
Of stopping there, each dwindled to be head  
Of infinite and absent Tyrolese  
Or Paduans; startling too the more that these  
Seemed passive and disposed of, uncared for,  
Yet doubtless on the whole (quoth Eglamor)  
Smiling—for if a wealthy man decays  
And out of store of such must wear all days  
One tattered suit alike in sun and shade,  
'Tis commonly some tarnished fine brocade  
Fit for a feast-night's flourish and no more;  
Nor otherwise poor Misery from her store  
Of looks is fain upgather, keep unfurled  
For common wear as she goes through the world  
The faint remainder of some worn-out smile  
Meant for a feast-night's service merely. While

## SORDELLO

Crowd upon crowd rose on Sordello thus,—  
Crowds no way interfering to discuss  
Much less dispute life's joys with one employed  
In envying them, or, if they enjoyed,  
There lingered somewhat indefinable  
In every look and tone, the mirth as well  
As woe, that fixed at once his estimate  
Of the result, their good or bad estate,—  
Old memories flocked but with a new effect:  
And the new body, ere he could suspect,  
Cohered, mankind and he were really fused,  
The new self seemed impatient to be used  
By him, but utterly another way  
Than that anticipated: strange to say,  
They were too much below him, more in thrall  
Than he, the adjunct than the principal.  
What bootéd scattered brilliances? the mind  
Of any number he might hope to bind  
And stamp with his own thought, howe'er august,  
If all the rest should grovel in the dust?  
No: first a mighty equilibrium sure  
To be established, privilege procure  
For them himself had long possessed! he felt  
An error, an exceeding error melt—  
While he was occupied with Mantuan chants  
Behoved him think of men and of their wants  
Such as he now distinguished every side,  
As his own want that might be satisfied,  
And, after that, of wondrous qualities  
Of his own soul demanding exercise,  
And like demand it longer: nor a claim  
On their part, nor was virtue in the aim  
At serving them on his, but, past retrieve,  
He in their toils felt with them, nor could leave,  
Wonder that in the eagerness to rule,  
Impress his will upon them, he the fool  
Had never entertained the obvious thought  
This last of his arrangements would be fraught  
With good to them as well, and he should be  
Rejoiced thereat; and if, as formerly,

## SORDELLO

He sighed the merry time of life must fleet,  
'Twas deeper now, for could the crowds repeat  
Their poor experiences? His hand that shook  
Was twice to be deplored. The Legate, look!  
With eyes, like flesh-blown thrush-eggs on a thread,  
Faint-blue and loosely floating in his head,  
Large tongue, moist open mouth; and this long while  
That owner of the idiotic smile  
Serves them! He fortunately saw in time  
His fault however, and the office prime  
Includes the secondary—best accept  
Both offices; Taurello its adept  
Could teach him the preparatory one,  
And how to do what he had fancied done  
Long previously, ere take the greater task.  
How render then these people happy? ask  
The people's friends: for there must be one good,  
One way to it—the Cause! he understood  
The meaning now of Palma; else why are  
The great ado, the trouble wide and far,  
These Guelfs and Ghibellins, the Lombard's hope  
Or its despair! twixt Emperor or Pope  
The confused shifting sort of Eden tale—  
Of hardihood recurring still to fail—  
That foreign interloping fiend, this free  
And native overbrooding Deity—  
Yet a dire fascination o'er the palms  
His presence ruined troubling through calms  
Of Paradise—or, on the other hand,  
The Pontiff, as your Kaisers understand,  
That, snake-like cursed of God to love the ground,  
With lulling eye breaks in the noon profound  
Some saving tree—who but the Kaiser drest  
As the dislodging angel of the pest  
Then? yet that pest bedropt, flat head, full fold,  
With coruscating dower of dyes; behold  
The secret, so to speak, and master-spring  
Of the whole contest! which of them shall bring  
Men good—perchance the most good—ay, it may  
Be that; the question is which knows the way.



## SORDELLO

And hereupon Count Mainard strutted past  
Out of San Pietro; never looked the last  
Of archers, slingers; and our friend began  
To recollect strange modes of serving man—  
Arbalist, catapult, brake, manganel,  
And more: this way of theirs may, who can tell,  
Need perfecting, said he: all's better solved  
At once: Taurello 'twas the task devolved  
On late—confront Taurello!

And at last

They did confront him. Scarcely an hour past  
When forth Sordello came, older by years  
Than at his entry. Unexampled fears  
Oppressed him, and he staggered off, blind, mute  
And deaf, like some fresh-mutilated brute,  
Into Ferrara—not the empty town  
That morning witnessed: he went up and down  
Streets whence the veil was stripped shred after shred,  
So that in place of huddling with their dead  
Indoors to answer Salinguerra's ends,  
Its folk may shift to crawl and sit like friends  
With any one. A woman gave him choice  
Of her two daughters, the infantile voice  
Or dimpled knee, for half a chain his throat  
Was clasped with; but an archer knew the coat—  
Its blue cross and eight lilies, bade beware  
One dogging him in concert with the pair  
Though thrumming on the sleeve that hid his knife.  
Night set in early, autumn dew fell rife,  
And fires were kindled while the Leaguers' mass  
Began at every carroch—he must pass  
Between that kneeling people: presently  
The carroch of Verona caught his eye  
With purple trappings; silently he bent  
Over its fire, when voices violent  
Began, Affirm not whom the youth was like  
That, striking from the porch, I did not strike  
Again; I too have chesnut hair; my kin  
Hate Azzo and stand up for Ecelin;  
Here, minstrel, drive bad thoughts away; sing; take

## SORDELLO

My glove for guerdon! and for that man's sake  
He turned: A song of Eglamor's! scarce named,  
When, Our Sordello's, rather! all exclaimed;  
Is not Sordello famousest for rhyme?  
He had been happy to deny, this time;  
Profess as heretofore the aching head,  
The failing heart; suspect that in his stead  
Some true Apollo had the charge of them,  
Was champion to reward or to condemn  
So his intolerable risk might shift  
Or share itself; but Naddo's precious gift  
Of gifts returned, be certain! at the close—  
I made that, said he to a youth who rose  
As if to hear: 'twas Palma through the band  
Conducted him in silence by the hand.

Back now for Salinguerra. Tito of Trent  
Gave place, remember, to the pair; who went  
In turn at Montelungo's visit—one  
After the other are they come and gone.  
A drear vast presence-chamber roughly set  
In order for this morning's use; you met  
The grim black twy-necked eagle, coarsely blacked  
With ochre on the naked walls, nor lacked  
There green and yellow tokens either side;  
But the new symbol Tito brought had tried  
The Legate's patience—nay, if Palma knew  
What Salinguerra almost meant to do  
Until the sight of her restored his lip  
A certain half-smile three months' chieftainship  
Had banished? Afterward the Legate found  
No change in him, nor asked what badge he wound  
And unwound carelessly! Now sate the Chief  
Silent as when our couple left whose brief  
Encounter wrought so opportune effect  
In thoughts he summoned not, nor would reject—  
Though time if ever, 'twas to pause now—fix  
On any sort of ending: wiles and tricks  
Exhausted, judge! his charge, the crazy town,  
Just managed to be hindered crashing down—  
His last sound troops ranged—care observed to post

## SORDELLO

His last of the maimed soldiers innermost—  
So much was plain enough, but somehow struck  
Him not before: and now with this strange luck  
Of Tito's news, rewarding his address  
So well, what thought he of? How the success  
With Friedrich's rescript there would either hush  
Ecelin's fiercest scruple up, or flush  
Young Ecelin's white cheek, or, last, exempt  
Himself from telling what there was to tempt?  
No: that this minstrel was Romano's last  
Servant—himself the first! Could he contrast  
The whole! that minstrel's thirty autumns spent  
In doing nought, his notablest event  
This morning's journey hither, as we told—  
Who yet was lean, outworn and really old,  
A stammering awkward youth (scarce dared he raise  
His eye before that magisterial gaze)  
—And Salinguerra with his fears and hopes  
Of sixty years, his Emperors and Popes,  
Cares and contrivances, yet you would say  
A youth 'twas nonchalantly looked away  
Through the embrasure northward o'er the sick  
Expostulating trees—so agile quick  
And graceful turned the head on the broad chest  
Encased in pliant steel, his constant vest,  
Whence split the sun off in a spray of fire  
Across the room; and, loosened of its tire  
Of steel, that head let see the comely brown  
Large massive locks discoloured as a crown  
Encircled them, so frayed the basnet where  
A sharp white line divided clean the hair;  
Glossy above, glossy below, it swept  
Curling and fine about a brow thus kept  
Calm, laid coat upon coat, marble and sound:  
This was the mystic mark the Tuscan found,  
Mused of, turned over books about. Square-faced,  
No lion more; two vivid eyes, enchased  
In hollows filled with many a shade and streak  
Settling from the bold nose and bearded cheek;  
Nor might the half-smile reach them that deformed

## SORDELLO

A lip supremely perfect else—unwarmed,  
Unwidened, less or more; indifferent  
Whether on trees or men his thoughts were bent—  
Thoughts rarely, after all, in trim and train  
As now: a period was fulfilled again;  
Such in a series made his life, compressed  
In each, one story serving for the rest—  
Therefore he smiled. Beyond stretched garden-grounds  
Where late the adversary, breaking bounds,  
Procured him an occasion That above,  
That eagle, testified he could improve  
Effectually; the Kaiser's symbol lay  
Beside his rescript, a new badge by way  
Of baldric; while another thing that marred  
Alike emprize, achievement and reward,  
Ecelin's missive was conspicuous too.

What a past life those flying thoughts pursue!  
As his no name in Mantua half so old;  
But at Ferrara, where his sires enrolled  
It latterly, the Adelardi spared  
Few means to rival them: both factions shared  
Ferrara, so that, counted out, 'twould yield  
A product very like the city's shield,  
Half black and white, or Ghibelin and Guelf,  
As after Salinguerra styled himself  
And Este who, till Marchesalla died  
—Last of the Adelardi, never tried  
His fortune there; but Marchesalla's child  
Transmits (can Blacks and Whites be reconciled  
And young Taurello wed Linguetta) wealth  
And sway to a sole grasp: each treats by stealth  
Already: when the Guelfs, the Ravennese  
Arrive, assault the Pietro quarter, seize  
Linguetta, and are gone! Our first dismay  
Abated somewhat, hurries down to lay  
The after indignation Bonface,  
No meaner spokesman: Learn the full disgrace  
Averted ere you blame us, wont to rate  
Your Salinguerra, and sole potentate  
That might have been, 'mongst Este's valvassors—

## SORDELLO

Ay, Azzo's—who, not privy to, abhors  
 Our step—but we were zealous. Azzo's then  
 To do with! Straight a meeting of old men:  
 The Lombard Eagle of the azure sphere  
 With Italy to build in, builds he here?  
 This deemed—the other owned upon advice—  
 A third reflected on the matter twice—  
 In fine, young Salinguerra's staunchest friends  
 Talked of the townsmen making him amends,  
 Gave him a goshawk, and affirmed there was  
 Rare sport, one morning, over the morass  
 A mile or so. He sauntered through the plain,  
 Was restless, fell to thinking, turned again  
 In time for Azzo's entry with the bride;  
 Count Boniface rode smirking at his side;  
 There's half Ferrara with her, whispers flew,  
 And all Ancona! If the stripling knew!

Anon the stripling was in Sicily  
 Where Heinrich ruled in right of Constance; he  
 Was gracious nor his guest incapable;  
 Each understood the other. So it fell,  
 One Spring, when Azzo, thoroughly at ease,  
 Had near forgotten what precise degrees  
 He crept by into such a downy seat,  
 Over the Count trudged in a special heat  
 To bid him of God's love dislodge from each  
 Of Salinguerra's Palaces; a breach  
 Might yawn else not so readily to shut,  
 For who was just arrived at Mantua but  
 The youngster, sword to thigh, tuft upon chin,  
 With tokens for Celano, Ecelin,  
 Pistore and the like! Next news: no whit.  
 Do any of Ferrara's domes besit  
 His wife of Heinrich's very blood: a band  
 Of foreigners assemble, understand  
 Garden-constructing, level and surround,  
 Build up and bury in. A last news crowned  
 The consternation: since his infant's birth  
 He only waits they end his wondrous girth  
 Of trees that link San Pietro with Tomà

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## SORDELLO

To visit us. When, as its Podestà  
Regaled him at Vicenza, Este, there  
With Boniface beforehand, each aware  
Of plots in progress, gave alarm, expelled  
A party which abetted him, but yelled  
Too hastily. The burning and the flight,  
And how Taurello, occupied that night  
With Ecelin, lost his wife and son, were told;  
—Not how he bore the blow, retained his hold,  
Got friends safe through, left enemies the worst  
O' the fray, and hardly seemed to care at first—  
But afterward you heard not constantly  
Of Salinguerra's House so sure to be!  
Though Azzo simply gained by the event  
A shifting of his plagues—this one content  
To fall behind the other and estrange,  
You will not say, his nature, but so change  
That in Romano sought he wife and child,  
And for Romano's sake was reconciled  
To losing individual life, deep sunk,  
A very pollard mortised in a trunk  
Which Arabs out of wantonness contrive  
Shall dwindle that the alien stock may thrive  
Till forth that vine-palm feathers to the root  
And red drops moisten them its arid fruit.  
Once set on Adelaide, the subtle mate  
And wholly at his beck, to emulate  
The Church's valiant women deed for deed,  
To paragon her namesake, win the meed  
Of its Matilda,—and they overbore  
The rest of Lombardy—not as before  
By an instinctive truculence, but patched  
The Kaiser's strategy until it matched  
The Pontiff's, sought old ends by novel means:  
Only, Romano Salinguerra screens.  
Heinrich was somewhat of the tardiest  
To comprehend, nor Philip acquiesced  
At once in the arrangement; reasoned, plied  
His friend with offers of another bride,  
A statelier function—fruitlessly; 'tis plain

## SORDELLO

Taurello's somehow one to let remain  
Obscure; and Otho, free to judge of both,  
—Ecelin the unready, harsh and loth,  
And this more plausible and facile wight  
With every point a-sparkle—chose the right,  
Admiring how his predecessors harped  
On the wrong man: thus, quoth he, wits are warped  
By outsides! Carelessly, withal, his life  
Suffered its many turns of peace and strife  
In many lands—you hardly could surprise  
A man who shamed Sordello (recognise)  
In this as much beside, that, unconcerned  
What qualities are natural or earned,  
With no ideal of graces, as they came  
He took them, singularly well the same—  
Speaking a dozen languages because  
Your Greek eludes you, leave the least of flaws  
In contracts, while, through Arab lore, deter  
Who may the Tuscan, once Jove trined for her,  
From Friedrich's path! Friedrich, whose pilgrimage  
The same man puts aside, whom he'll engage  
To leave next year John Brienne in the lurch,  
And see Bassano for Saint Francis' church  
—Profound on Guido the Bolognian's piece  
That, if you lend him credit, rivals Greece—  
Angels, with aureoles like golden quoits  
Pitched home, applauding Ecelin's exploits  
In Painimrie. He strung the angelot;  
Made rhymes thereto; for prowess, clove he not  
Tiso, last siege, from crest to crupper? why  
Detail you thus a varied mastery  
But that Taurello, ever on the watch  
For men, to read their hearts and thereby catch  
Their capabilities and purposes,  
Displayed himself so far as displayed these:  
While our Sordello only cared to know  
About men as a means for him to show  
Himself, and men were much or little worth  
According as they kept in or drew forth  
That self; the other's choicest instruments

## SORDELLO

Surmised him shallow. Meantime malcontents  
Dropped off, town after town grew wiser; how  
Change the world's face? said people; as 'tis now  
It has been, will be ever: very fine  
Subjecting things profane to things divine  
In talk: this contumacy will fatigue  
The vigilance of Este and the League,  
Observe! accordingly, their basement sapped,  
Azzo and Boniface were soon entrapped  
By Ponte Alto, and in one month's space  
Slept at Verona: either left a brace  
Of sons—so three years after, either's pair  
Lost Guglielm and Aldobrand its heir:  
Azzo remained and Richard—all the stay  
Of Este and St. Boniface, at bay  
As 'twere; when either Ecelin grew old  
Or his brain altered—not the proper mould  
For new appliances—his old palm stock  
Endured no influx of strange strengths: he'd rock  
As in a drunkenness, or chuckle low  
As proud of the completeness of his woe,  
Then weep—real tears! Now make some mad onslaught  
On Este, heedless of the lesson taught  
So painfully—now cringe, sue peace, but peace  
At price of all advantage; therefore cease  
The fortunes of Romano! Up at last  
Rose Este and Romano sank as fast.  
And men remarked this sort of peace and war  
Commenced while Salinguerra was afar:  
And every friend besought him, but in vain,  
To wait his old adherent, call again  
Taurello: not he—who had daughters, sons,  
Could plot himself, nor needed any one's  
Advice. 'Twas Adelaide's remaining staunch  
Prevented his destruction root and branch  
Forthwith; Goito green above her, gay  
He made alliances, gave lands away  
To whom it pleased accept them, and withdrew  
For ever from the world. Taurello, who  
Was summoned to the convent, then refused



## SORDELLO

A word,—however patient, thus abused,  
At Este's mercy through his imbecile  
Ally, was fain dismiss the foolish smile,  
And a few movements of the happier sort  
Changed matters, put himself in men's report  
As heretofore; he had to fight, beside,  
And that became him ever. So in pride  
And flushing of this kind of second youth  
He dealt a good-will blow: Este in truth  
Was prone—and you remembered, somewhat late,  
A laughing old outrageous stifled hate  
He bore that Este—how it would outbreak  
At times spite of disguise, like an earthquake  
In sunny weather—as that noted day  
When with his hundred friends he offered slay,  
Azzo before the Kaiser's face: and how  
On Azzo's calm refusal to allow  
A liegeman's challenge straight he too was calmed:  
His hate, no doubt, would bear to lie embalmed,  
Bricked up, the moody Pharaoh, to survive  
All intermediate crumbings, be alive  
At earth's catastrophe—'twas Este's crash  
Not Azzo's he demanded, so no rash  
Procedure! Este's true antagonist  
Rose out of Ecelin: all voices whist,  
Each glance was sharpened, wit predicted. He  
'Twas leaned in the embrasure presently,  
Amused with his own efforts, now, to trace  
With his steel-sheathed forefinger Friedrich's face  
I' the dust: and as the trees waved sere, his smile  
Deepened, and words expressed its thought erewhile.

Ay, fairly housed at last, my old compeer?  
That we should stick together all the year  
I kept Verona!—How old Boniface,  
Old Azzo caught us in its market-place,  
He by that pillar, I this pillar, each  
In mid swing, more than fury of his speech,  
Egging our rabble on to disavow  
Allegiance to the Marquis—Bacchus, how  
They caught us! Ecelin must turn their drudge;

## SORDELLO

Nor, if released, will Salinguerra grudge  
Paying arrears of tribute due long since—  
Bacchus! My man, could promise then, nor wince,  
The bones-and-muscles! sound of wind and limb,  
Spoke he the set excuse I framed for him;  
And now he sits me, slaving and mute,  
Intent on chafing each starved purple foot  
Benumbed past aching with the altar slab—  
Will no vein throb there when some monk shall blab  
Spitefully to the circle of bald scalps  
“Friedrich’s affirmed to be our side the Alps”  
—Eh, brother Lactance, brother Anaclet?  
Sworn to abjure the world and the world’s fret,  
God’s own now? drop the dormitory bar,  
Enfold the scanty grey serge scapular  
Twice o’er the cowl to muffle memories out—  
So! but the midnight whisper turns a shout,  
Eyes wink, mouths open, pulses circulate  
In the stone walls: the past, the world you hate  
Is with you, ambush, open field—or see  
The surging flame—they fire Vicenza—glee!  
Follow, let Pilio and Bernardi chafe—  
Bring up the Mantuans—through San Biagio—safe!  
Ah, the mad people waken? Ah, they writhe  
And reach you? if they block the gate—no tithe  
Can pass—keep back you Bassanese! the edge,  
Use the edge—sheer, thrust, hew, melt down the wedge,  
Let out the black of those black upturned eyes!  
Hell—are they sprinkling fire too? the blood fries  
And hisses on your brass gloves as they tear  
Those upturned faces choaking with despair.  
Brave! Slidder through the reeking gate—how now!  
You six had charge of her? And then the vow  
Comes, and the foam spirts, hair’s plucked, till one  
shriek  
(I hear it) and you fling—you cannot speak—  
Your gold-flowered basnet to a man who haled  
The Adelaide he dared scarce view unveiled  
This morn, naked across the fire: how crown  
The archer that exhausted lays you down

## SORDELLO

Your infant, smiling at the flame, and dies?  
While one, while mine . . .

Bacchus! I think there lies  
More than one corpse there (and he paced the room)  
—Another cinder somewhere—'twas my doom  
Beside, my doom: if Adelaide is dead  
I am the same, this Azzo lives instead  
Of that to me, and we pull any how  
Este into a heap—the matter's now  
At the true juncture slipping us so oft;  
Ay, Heinrich died and Otho, please you, doffed,  
His crown at such a juncture: let but hold  
Our Friedrich's purpose, let this chain enfold  
The neck of . . . who but this same Ecelin?  
That must recoil when the best days begin—  
Recoil? that's nought; if the recoiler leaves  
His name for me to fight with, no one grieves!  
But he must interfere, forsooth, unlock  
His cloister to become my stumbling-block  
Just as of old! Ay, ay, there 'tis again—  
The land's inevitable Head—explain  
The reverences that subject us! Count  
These Ecelins now! not to say as fount,  
Originating power of thought, from twelve  
That drop i' the trenches they joined hands to delve  
Six shall surpass him, but . . . why, men must twine  
Somehow with something! Ecelin's a fine  
Clear name! 'Twere simpler, doubtless, twine with me  
At once: our cloistered friend's capacity  
Was of a sort! I had to share myself  
In fifty portions, like an o'ertasked elf  
That's forced illume in fifty points the vast  
Rare vapour he's environed by: at last  
My strengths, though sorely frittered, e'en converge  
And crown—no, Bacchus, they have yet to urge  
The man be crowned!

That aloe, an he durst,  
Would climb! just such a bloated sprawler first  
I noted in Messina's castle court  
The day I came, and Heinrich asked in sport

## SORDELLO

If I would pledge my faith to win him back  
His right in Lombardy; for, once bid pack  
Marauders, he continued, in my stead  
You rule, Taurello! and upon this head  
Laid the silk glove of Constance—I see her  
Too, mantled head to foot in miniver,  
Retrude following!

I am absolved

From further toil: the empery devolved  
On me, 'twas Tito's word: and think, to lay  
For once my plan, pursue my plan my way,  
Prompt nobody, and render an account  
Taurello to Taurello! nay, I mount  
To Friedrich—he conceives the post I kept,  
Who did true service, able or inept,  
Who's worthy guerdon, Ecelin or I:  
Me guerdoned, counsel follows; would he vie  
With the Pope really? Azzo, Boniface  
Compose a right-arm Hohenstauffen's race  
Must break ere govern Lombardy; I point  
How easy 'twere to twist, once out of joint,  
The socket from the bone; my Azzo's stare  
Meanwhile! for I, this idle strap to wear,  
Shall—fret myself abundantly, what end  
To serve? There's left me twenty years to spend  
—How better than my old way? Had I one  
Who laboured overthrow my work—a son  
Hatching with Azzo superb treachery,  
To root my pines up and then poison me,  
Suppose—'twere while frustrate that! Beside  
Another life's ordained me: the world's tide  
Rolls, and what hope of parting from the press  
Of waves, a single wave through weariness  
That's gently led aside, laid upon shore?  
My life must be lived out in foam and roar,  
No question. Fifty years the province held  
Taurello; troubles raised, and troubles quelled,  
He in the midst—who leaves this quaint stone place,  
Those trees a year or two, then, not a trace  
Of him! How obtain hold, fetter men's tongues

## SORDELLO

Like that Sordello with his foolish songs—  
To which, despite our bustle, he is linked?  
—Flowers one may teaze, that never seem extinct;  
Ay, that patch, surely, green as ever, where  
I set Her Moorish lentisk, by the stair,  
To overawe the aloes—and we trod  
Those flowers, how call you such? into the sod;  
A stately foreigner—and worlds of pain  
To make it thrive, arrest rough winds—all vain!  
It would decline—these would not be destroyed—  
And now, where is it—where can you avoid  
The flowers? I frighten children twenty years  
Longer!—which way, too, Ecelin appears  
To thwart me, for his son's besotted youth  
Gives promise of the proper tiger-tooth,  
They prattle, at Vicenza! Fate, fate, fate,  
My fine Taurello! go you, promulgate  
Friedrich's decree, and here's shall aggrandise  
Young Ecelin—our Prefect's badge! a prize  
Too precious, certainly.

How now? Compete  
With my old comrade? shuffle from their seat  
His children? Paltry dealing! don't I know  
Ecelin? now, I think, and years ago!  
What's changed—the weakness? did not I compound  
For that, and undertake preserve him sound  
Despite it? Say Taurello's hankering  
After the boy's preferment—this play-thing  
To carry, Bacchus! And he laughed.

Remark

Why schemes wherein cold-blooded men embark  
Prosper, when your enthusiastic sort  
Fails: for these last are ever stopping short—  
(Much to be done—so little they can do!)  
The careless tribe see nothing to pursue  
Should they desist; meantime their scheme succeeds.

Thoughts were caprices in the course of deeds  
Methodic with Taurello; so he turned,  
Enough amused by fancies fairly earned  
Of Este's horror-struck submitted neck,

## SORDELLO

And Boniface completely at his beck,  
To his own petty but immediate doubt  
If he could pacify the League without  
Conceding Richard; just to this was brought  
That interval of vain discursive thought!  
As, shall I say, some Ethiop, past pursuit  
Of all enslavers, dips a shackled foot,  
Burnt to the blood, into the drowsy black  
Enormous water current, his sole track  
To his own tribe again, where he is King;  
And laughs because he guesses, numbering  
The yellower poison-wattles on the pouch  
Of the first lizard wrested from its couch  
Under the slime (whose skin, the while, he strips  
To cure his nostril with, and festered lips,  
And eyeballs bloodshot through the desert blast)  
That he has reached its boundary, at last  
May breathe;—thinks o'er enchantments of the South  
Sovereign to plague his enemies, their mouth  
And nails, and hair; but, these enchantments tried  
In fancy, puts them soberly aside  
For truth, cool projects, a return with friends,  
The likelihood of winning wild amends  
Ere long; thinks that, takes comfort silently,  
And from the river's brink his wrongs and he,  
Hugging revenge close to their hearts, are soon  
Off-striding for the Mountains of the Moon.

Midnight: the watcher nodded on his spear,  
Since clouds dispersing left a passage clear,  
If any meagre and discoloured moon  
Should venture forth; and such was peering soon  
Above the harassed city—her close lanes  
Closer, not half so tapering her fanes,  
As though she shrunk into herself to keep  
What little life was saved more safely. Heap  
By heap the watch-fires mouldered, and beside  
The blackest spoke Sordello and replied  
Palma with none to listen. 'Tis your Cause—  
What makes a Ghibellin? There should be laws—  
(Remember how my youth escaped! I trust

## SORDELLO

To you for manhood, Palma; tell me just  
As any child)—laws secretly at work  
Explaining this. Assure me good may lurk  
Under the bad; my multitude has part  
In your designs, their welfare is at heart  
With Salinguerra, to their interest  
Refer the deeds he dwelt on—so divest  
Our conference of much that scared me: why  
Affect that heartless tone to Tito? I  
Esteemed myself, yes, in my inmost mind  
This morn, a recreant to that wide mankind  
O'erlooked till now: why boast my spirit's force,  
—That force denied its object? why divorce  
These, then admire my spirit's flight the same,  
As though it bore a burden, which could tame  
No pinion, from dead void to living space?  
—That orb consigned to chaos and disgrace,  
Why vaunt complacently my frantic dance,  
Making a feat's facilities enhance  
The marvel? But I front Taurello, one  
Of happier fate, and what I should have done  
He does; the multitude aye paramount  
With him, its making progress may account  
For his abiding still: when . . . but you heard  
His talk with Tito—the excuse preferred  
For burning those five hostages—and broached  
By way of blind, as you and I approached,  
I do believe.

She spoke: then he, My thought  
Plainer expressed! All Friedrich's profit—nought  
Of these meantime, of conquests to achieve  
For them, of wretchednesses to relieve  
While profiting that Friedrich. Azzo, too,  
Supports a cause: what is it? Guelfs pursue  
Their ends by means like yours, or better?

When

The Guelfs were shown alike, men ranged with men,  
And deed with deed, blaze, blood, with blood and  
blaze,

Morn broke: once more, Sordello, meet its gaze

## SORDELLO

Proudly—the people's charge against thee fails  
In every point, while either party quails !  
These are the busy ones—be silent thou !  
Two parties take the world up, and allow  
No third, yet have one principle, subsist  
By the same method ; whoso shall enlist  
With either, ranks with man's inveterate foes.  
So there is one less quarrel to compose  
'Twixt us : the Guelf's, the Ghibellin's to curse—  
I have done nothing, but both sides do worse  
Than nothing ; nay to me, forgotten, reft  
Of insight, lapped by trees and flowers, was left  
The notion of a service—ha ? What lured  
Me here, what mighty aim was I assured  
Moved Salinguerra ? if a Cause remained  
Intact, distinct from these, and fate ordained,  
For all the past, that Cause for me ?

One pressed

Before them here, a watcher, to suggest  
The subject for a ballad : he must know  
The tale of the dead worthy, long ago  
Consul of Rome—that's long ago for us,  
Minstrels and bowmen, idly squabbling thus  
In the world's corners—but too late, no doubt,  
For the brave time he sought to bring about  
—Not know Crescentius Nomentanus ? Then  
He cast about for terms to tell him, when  
Sordello disavowed it, how they used  
Whenever their Superior introduced  
A novice to the Brotherhood—(for I  
Was just a brown-sleeve brother, merrily  
Appointed too, quoth he, till Innocent  
Bade me relinquish, to my small content,  
My wife or my brown sleeves) out some one spoke  
Ere nocturns of Crescentius, to revoke  
The edict issued after his demise  
That blotted memory, and effigies,  
All out except a floating power, a name  
Including, tending to produce the same  
Great act. Rome, dead, forgotten, lived at least



## SORDELLO

Within that man, though to a vulgar priest  
And a vile stranger, fit to be a slave  
Of Rome's, Pope John, King Otho, fortune gave  
The rule there: but Crescentius, haply drest  
In white, called Roman Consul for a jest,  
Taking the people at their word, forth stept  
As upon Brutus' heel, nor ever kept  
Us waiting; stept he forth and from his brain  
Gave Rome out on its ancient place again,  
Ay, bade proceed with Brutus' Rome kings styled  
Themselves the citizens of, and, beguiled  
Thereby, were fain select the lustrous gem  
Out of a lapfull, spoil their diadem  
—The Senate's cypher was so hard to scratch!  
He flashes like a phanal, men too catch  
The flame, and Rome's accomplished; when returned  
Otho and John the Consul's step had spurned,  
With Hugo Lord of Este, to redress  
The wrongs of each. Crescentius in the stress  
Of adverse fortune bent. They crucified  
Their Consul in the Forum and abide  
Such slaves at Rome e'er since, that I—(for I  
Was once a brown-sleeve brother, merrily  
Appointed)—I had option to keep wife  
Or keep brown sleeves, and managed in the strife  
Lose both. A song of Rome!

And Rome, indeed,  
Robed at Goito in fantastic weed,  
The Mother-City of his Mantuan days,  
Looked an established point of light whence rays  
Traversed the world; and all the clustered homes  
Beside of men were bent on being Romes  
In their degree; the question was how each  
Should most resemble Rome, clean out of reach  
Herself; nor struggled either principle  
To change what it aspired possess—Rome, still  
For Friedrich or Honorius.

Rome's the Cause!  
The Rome of the old Pandects, our new laws—  
The Capitol turned Castle Angelo

## SORDELLO

And structures that inordinately glow  
Corrected by the Theatre forlorn  
As a black mundane shell, its world late born  
—Verona, that's beside it. These combined,  
We typify the scheme to put mankind  
Once more in full possession of their rights  
By his sole agency. On me it lights  
To build up Rome again—me, first and last:  
For such a Future was endured the Past!  
And thus in the grey twilight forth he sprung  
To give his thought consistency among  
The People's self, and let their truth avail  
Finish the dream grown from the archer's tale.

## BOOK THE FIFTH.

It is the same Sordello in the dusk  
As at the dawn? merely a perished husk  
Now, that arose a power like to build  
Up Rome again? The proud conception chilled  
So soon? Ay, watch that latest dream of thine  
—A Rome indebted to no Palatine,  
Drop arch by arch, Sordello! Art possess  
Of thy wish now—rewarded for thy quest  
To-day among Ferrara's squalid sons—  
Are this and this and this the shining ones  
Meet for the Shining City? Sooth to say  
Our favoured tenantry pursue their way  
After a fashion! This companion slips  
On the smooth causey, t'other blinkard trips  
At his mooned sandal. Leave to lead the brawls  
Here i' the atria? No, friend. He that sprawls  
On aught but a stibadium suffers . . . goose,  
Puttest our lustral vase to such an use?  
Oh, huddle up the day's disasters—march  
Ye runagates, and drop thou, arch by arch,  
Rome!

## SORDELLO

Yet before they quite disband—a whim—  
Study a shelter, now, for him, and him,  
Nay, even him, to house them! any cave  
Suffices—throw out earth. A loophole? Brave!  
They ask to feel the sun shine, see the grass  
Grow, hear the larks sing? Dead art thou, alas,  
And I am dead! But here's our son excels  
At hurdle-weaving any Scythian, fells  
Oak and devises rafters, dreams and shapes  
That dream into a door-post, just escapes  
The mystery of hinges. Lie we both  
Perdue another age. The goodly growth  
Of brick and stone! Our building-pelt was rough,  
But that descendant's garb suits well enough  
A portico-contriver. Speed the years—  
What's time to us? and lo, a city rears  
Itself! nay, enter—what's the grave to us?  
So, our forlorn acquaintance carry thus  
A head! successively sewer, forum, cirque—  
Last age that aqueduct was counted work,  
And now they tire the artificer upon  
Blank alabaster, black obsidion,  
—Careful Jove's face be duly fulgorant,  
And mother Venus' kiss-creased nipples pant  
Back into pristine pulpiness, ere fixed  
Above the baths. What difference betwixt  
This Rome and ours? Resemblance what between  
The scurvy dumb-show and the pageant sheen—  
These Romans and our rabble? Rest thy wit  
And listen: step by step,—a workman fit  
With each, nor too fit,—to one's task, one's time,—  
No leaping o'er the petty to the prime,  
When just the substituting osier lithe  
For bulrushes, and after, wood for withe  
To further loam and roughcast work a stage,  
Exacts an architect, exacts an age,—  
Nor tables of the Mauritanian tree  
For men whose maple-log's their luxury,—  
And Rome's accomplished! Better (say you) merge  
At once all workmen in the demiurge,

## SORDELLO

All epochs in a life-time, and all tasks  
In one: undoubtedly the city basks  
I' the day—while those you'd feast there want the  
knack

Of keeping fresh-chalked gowns from speck and brack,  
Distinguish not your peacock from your swan,  
Or Mareotic juice from Cœcuban,  
Nay sneer . . . enough! 'twas happy to conceive  
Rome on a sudden, nor shall fate bereave  
Us of that credit: for the rest, her spite  
Is an old story—serves us very right  
For adding yet another to the dull  
List of devices—things proved beautiful  
Could they be done, Sordello cannot do.

He sate upon the terrace, plucked and threw  
The powdery aloe-cusps away, saw shift  
Rome's walls, and drop arch after arch, and drift  
Mist-like afar those pillars of all stripe,  
Mounds of all majesty. Thou archetype,  
Last of my dreams and loveliest, depart!

And then a low voice wound into his heart:  
Sordello (lower than a Pythoness  
Conceding to a Lydian King's distress  
The cause of his long error—one mistake  
Of her past oracle) Sordello, wake!  
Where is the vanity? Why count you, one  
The first step with the last step? What is gone  
Except that aëry magnificence—  
That last step you took first? an evidence  
You were . . . no matter. Let those glances fall!  
This basis, this beginning step of all,  
Which proves you one of us, is this gone too?  
Pity to disconcert one versed as you  
In fate's ill-nature, but its full extent  
Eludes Sordello, even: the veil's rent,  
Read the black writing—that collective man  
Outstrips the individual! Who began  
The greatnesses you know?—ay, your own art  
Shall serve us: put the poet's mimes apart—  
Close with the poet—closer—what? a dim

## SORDELLO

Too plain form separates itself from him?  
Alcama's song enmeshes the lulled Isle,  
Woven into the echoes left erewhile  
Of Nina's, one soft web of song: no more  
Turning his name, flower-like o'er and o'er!  
An elder poet in the younger's place—  
Take Nina's strength—but lose Alcama's grace?  
Each neutralizes each then! gaze your fill;  
Search further and the past presents you still  
New Ninas, new Alcamas, time's mid-night  
Concluding,—better say its evenlight  
Of yesterday. You, now, in this respect  
Of benefitting people (to reject  
The favour of your fearful ignorance  
A thousand phantasms eager to advance,  
Refer you but to those within your reach)  
Were you the first who got, to use plain speech,  
The Multitude to be materialized?  
That loose eternal unrest—who devised  
An apparition i' the midst? the rout  
Who checked, the breathless ring who formed about  
That sudden flower? Get round at any risk  
The gold-rough pointel, silver-blazing disk  
O' the lily! Swords across it! Reign thy reign  
And serve thy frolic service, Charlemagne!  
—The very child of over-joyousness,  
Unfeeling thence, strong therefore: Strength by stress  
Of Strength comes of a forehead confident,  
Two widened eyes expecting heart's content,  
A calm as out of just-quelled noise, nor swerves  
The ample cheek for doubt, in gracious curves  
Abutting on the upthrust nether lip—  
He wills, how should he doubt then? Ages slip—  
Was it Sordello pried into the work  
So far accomplished, and discovering lurk  
A company amid the other clans,  
Only distinct in priests for castellans  
And popes for suzerains (their rule confessed  
Its rule, their interest its interest,  
Living for sake of living—there an end,

## SORDELLO

Wrapt in itself, no energy to spend  
In making adversaries or allies);  
Dived he into its capabilities  
And dared create out of that sect a soul  
Should turn the multitude, already whole,  
To some account? Speak plainer! Is't so sure  
God's church lives by a King's investiture?  
Look to last step: a staggering—a shock—  
What's sand shall be demolished, but the rock  
Endures—a column of black fiery dust  
Blots heaven—woe, woe, 'tis prematurely thrust  
Aside, that step!—the air clears—nought's erased  
Of the true outline? Thus much is firm based—  
The other was a scaffold: see you stand  
Buttressed upon his mattock Hildebrand  
Of the huge brain-mask welded ply o'er ply  
As in a forge; it buries either eye  
White and extinct, that stupid brow; teeth clenched,  
The neck's tight-corded, too, the chin deep-trenched,  
As if a cloud enveloped him while fought  
Under it all, grim prizers, thought with thought  
At dead-lock, agonizing he, until  
The victor thought leap radiant up, and Will,  
The slave with folded arms and drooping lids  
They fought for, lean forth flame-like as it bids.  
—A root, the crippled mandrake of the earth,  
Thwarted and dwarfed and blasted in its birth,  
Be certain; fruit of suffering's excess,  
Whence feeling, therefore stronger: still by stress  
Of strength, work Knowledge! Full three hundred  
years

For men to wear away in smiles and tears  
Between the two that nearly seem to touch,  
Observe you: quit one workman and we clutch  
Another, letting both their trains go by—  
The actors—out of either's policy,  
Heinrich, on this hand, Otho, Barbaross,  
May carry the Imperial crowns across,  
Aix' Iron, Milan's Silver, and Rome's Gold—  
As Alexander, Innocent uphold

## SORDELLO

On that the Papal keys—but, link on link,  
Why is it neither chain betrays a chink?  
How coalesce the small and great? Alack,  
For one thrust forward, fifty such fall back!  
The couple there alone help Gregory?  
Hark—from the hermit Peter's thin sad cry  
At Claremont, yonder to the serf that says  
Friedrich's no liege of his while he delays  
Getting the Pope's curse off him! The Crusade—  
Or trick of breeding strength by other aid  
Than strength, is safe: hark—from the wild harangue  
Of Vimmercato, to the carroch's clang  
Yonder! The League—or trick of turning strength  
Against pernicious strength, is safe at length:  
Yet hark—from Mantuan Albert's making cease  
The fierce ones, to Saint Francis preaching peace  
Yonder! God's Truce—or trick to supersede  
The use of strength at all, is safe. Indeed  
We trench upon the future! Who shall found  
Next step, next age—trail plenteous o'er the ground  
Vine-like, produced by joy and sorrow, whence  
Unfeeling and yet feeling, strongest thence:  
Knowledge by stress of Knowledge is it? No—  
E'en were Sordello ready to forego  
His work for this, 'twere overleaping work  
Some one must do before, howe'er it irk:  
No end's in sight yet of that second road:  
Who means to help must still support the load  
Hildebrand lifted—why hast Thou, he groaned,  
Imposed, my God, a thing thy Paul had moaned,  
Thy Moses failed beneath, on me? and yet  
That grandest of the tasks God ever set  
On man left much to do: a mighty wrench—  
The scaffold falls—but half the pillars blench  
Merely, start back again—perchance have been  
Taken for buttresses: crash every screen,  
Hammer the tenons better, and engage  
A gang about your work, for the next age  
Or two, of Knowledge, part by Strength and part  
By Knowledge! then—Ay, then perchance may start

## SORDELLO

Sordello on his race—but who'll divulge  
Time's secrets? lo, a step's awry, a bulge  
To be corrected by a step we thought  
Got over long ago—till that is wrought,  
No progress! and that scaffold in its turn  
Becomes, its service o'er, a thing to spurn.  
Meanwhile, your some half-dozen years of life  
Longer, dispose you to forego the strife—  
Who takes exception? 'Tis Ferrara, mind,  
Before us, and Goito's left behind:  
As you then were, as half yourself, desist!  
—The warrior-part of you may, an it list,  
Finding real faulchions difficult to poise,  
Fling them afar and taste the cream of joys  
By wielding one in fancy,—what is bard  
Of you, may spurn the vehicle that marred  
Elys so much, and in mere fancy glut  
His sense on her free beauties—we have but  
To please ourselves for law, and you could please  
What then appeared yourself by dreaming these  
Rather than doing these: now, fancy's trade  
Is ended, mind, nor one half may evade  
The other half: our friends are half of you:  
Out of a thousand helps, just one or two  
Can be accomplished presently—but flinch  
From these (as from the faulchion raised an inch,  
Elys described a couplet) and make proof  
Of fancy,—and while one half lolls aloof  
O' the grass, completing Rome to the tip-top—  
See if, for that, the other half will stop  
A tear, begin a smile: that rabble's woes,  
Ludicrous in their patience as they chose  
To sit about their town and quietly  
Be slaughtered,—the poor reckless soldiery,  
With their ignoble rhymes on Richard, how  
Polt-foot, sang they, was in a pitfall now,  
Cheering each other from the engine-mounts,—  
That crippled sprawling idiot who recounts  
How, lopt of limbs, he lay, stupid as stone,  
Till the pains crept from out him one by one,



## SORDELLO

And wriggles round the archers on his head  
To earn a morsel of their chesnut bread,—  
And Cino, always in the self-same place  
Weeping; beside that other wretch's case  
Eyepits to ear one gangrene since he plied  
The engine in his coat of raw sheep's hide  
A double watch in the noon sun; and see  
Lucchino, beauty, with the favors free,  
Trim hacqueton, and sprucely scented hair,  
Campaigning it for the first time—cut there  
In two already, boy enough to crawl  
For latter orpine round the Southern wall,  
Tomà, where Richard's kept, because that whore  
Marfisa the fool never saw before  
Sickened for flowers this wearisomest siege.  
Then Tiso's wife—men liked their pretty liege,  
Cared for her least of whims once, Berta, wed  
A twelvemonth gone, and, now poor Tiso's dead,  
Delivering herself of his first child  
On that chance heap of wet filth, reconciled  
To fifty gazers. (Here a wind below  
Made moody music augural of woe  
From the pine barrier)—What if, now the scene  
Draws to a shutting, if yourself have been  
—You, plucking purples in Goito's moss  
Like edges of a trabea (not to cross  
Your consul-feeling) or dry aloe-shafts  
Here at Ferrara—He whom fortune wafts  
This very age her best inheritance  
Of opportunities? Yet we advance  
Upon the last! Since talking is your trade,  
There's Salinguerra left you to persuade,  
And then—

No—no—which latest chance secure!

Leapt up and cried Sordello: this made sure  
The Past is yet redeemable whose work  
Was—help the Guelfs, and I, howe'er it irk,  
Thus help! He shook the foolish aloe-haulm  
Out of his doublet, paused, proceeded calm  
To the appointed presence. The large head

## SORDELLO

Turned on its socket; And your spokesman, said  
The large voice, is Elcorte's happy sprout?  
Few such (so finishing a speech no doubt  
Addressed to Palma, silent at his side)  
Our sober councils have diversified:  
Elcorte's son!—but forward as you may,  
Our lady's minstrel with so much to say!  
The hesitating sunset floated back,  
Rosily traversed in a single track  
The chamber, from the lattice o'er the girth  
Of pines to the huge eagle blacked in earth  
Opposite, outlined sudden, spur to crest,  
That solid Salinguerra, and caressed  
Palma's contour; 'twas Day looped back Night's pall;  
Sordello had a chance left spite of all.

And much he made of the convincing speech  
He meant should compensate the Past and reach  
Through his youth's daybreak of unprofit, quite  
To his noon's labour, so proceed till night  
At leisure! The contrivances to bind  
Taurello body with the Cause and mind,  
—Was the consummate rhetoric just that?  
Yet most Sordello's argument dropped flat  
Through his accustomed fault of breaking yoke,  
Disjoining him who felt from him who spoke:  
Was 't not a touching incident—so prompt  
A rendering the world its just accout  
Once proved its debtor? Who'd suppose before  
This proof that he, Goito's God of yore,  
At duty's instance could demean himself  
So memorably, dwindle to a Guelf?  
Be sure, in such delicious flattery steeped,  
His inmost self at the out-portion peeped  
Thus occupied; then stole a glance at those  
Appealed to, curious if her colour rose  
Or his lip moved, while he discreetly urged  
The need of Lombardy's becoming purged  
At soonest of her barons; the poor part  
Abandoned thus missing the blood at heart,  
Spirit in brain, unseasonably off

## SORDELLO

Elsewhere! But, though his speech was worthy scoff,  
Good-humoured Salinguerra, famed for tact  
That way, who, careless of his phrase, ne'er lacked  
The right phrase, and harangued Honorius dumb  
At his accession, looked as all fell plumb  
To purpose and himself took interest  
In every point his new instructor pressed  
—Left playing with the rescript's white wax seal  
To scrutinize Sordello head to heel:  
Then means he . . yes, assent sure? Well? Alas,  
He said no more than, So it comes to pass  
That poesy, sooner than politics,  
Makes fade young hair: to think his speech could  
fix  
Taurello!

Then a flash; he knew the truth:  
So fantasies shall break and fritter youth  
That he has long ago lost earnestness,  
Lost will to work, lost power to express  
Even the need of working! Ere the grave  
No more occasions now, though he should crave  
One such in right of superhuman toil  
To do what was undone, repair his spoil,  
Alter the Past—nought brings again the chance.  
Not that he was to die: he saw askance  
Protract the ignominious years beyond  
To dream in—time to hope and time despond,  
Remember and forget, be sad, rejoice  
As saved a trouble, suited to his choice,  
—One way or other idle life out, drop  
No few smooth verses by the way—for prop  
A thyrsus these sad people should, the same,  
Pick up, set store by, and, so far from blame,  
Plant o'er his hearse convinced his better part  
Survived him. Rather tear men out the heart  
Of the truth! Sordello muttered, and renewed  
His propositions for the Multitude.

But Salinguerra who, the last attack,  
Threw himself in his ruffling corslet back  
To hear the better, smilingly resumed

## SORDELLO

Some task; beneath the carroch's warning boomed;  
He must decide with Tito; courteously  
He turned then, even seeming to agree  
With his admonisher—"Assist the Pope,  
Extend his domination, fill the scope  
Of the Church based on All, by All, for All—  
Change Secular to Evangelical"—  
Echoing his very sentence: all seemed lost,  
When sudden he looked, laughingly almost,  
To Palma: This opinion of your friend's  
For instance, would it answer Palma's ends?  
Best, were it not, turn Guelf, submit our Strength  
(Here he drew out his baldric to its length)  
To the Pope's Knowledge—letting Richard slip,  
Wide to the walls throw ope your gates, equip  
Azzo with . . . but no matter! Who'll subscribe  
To a trite censure of the minstrel tribe  
Henceforward? or pronounce, as Heinrich used,  
"Spear-heads for battle, burr-heads for the joust"  
—When Constance, for his couplets, would promote  
Alcama from a parti-coloured coat  
To holding her lord's stirrup in the wars.  
Not that I see where couplet-making jars  
With common sense: at Mantua we had borne  
This chanted, easier than their most forlorn  
Of bull-fights,—that's indisputable!

Brave!

Whom vanity nigh slew, contempt shall save!  
All's at an end: a Troubadour suppose  
Mankind's to class him with their friends or foes?  
A puny uncouth ailing vassal think  
The world and him in some especial link?  
Abrupt the visionary tether's burst—  
What's to reward or what to be amerced  
If a poor drudge, solicitous to dream  
Deservingly, gets tangled by his theme  
So far as to conceit his knack or gift  
Or whatsoe'er it be of verse might lift  
The globe, a lever like the hand and head  
Of—Men of Action, as the Jongleurs said,

## SORDELLO

—The Great Men, in the people's dialect?

And not a moment did this scorn affect  
Sordello: scorn the poet? They, for once,  
Asking "what was," obtained a full response.  
Bid Naddo think at Mantua, he had but  
To look into his promptuary, put  
His hand on a set thought in a set speech:  
And was Sordello fitted thus for each  
Conjuncture? No wise; since within his soul  
Perception brooded unexpressed and whole:  
A healthy spirit like a healthy frame  
Craves aliment in plenty and, the same,  
Changes, assimilates its aliment:  
Perceived Sordello, on a truth intent?  
Next day no formularies more you saw  
Than figs or olives in a sated maw  
—'Tis Knowledge, whither such preceptions tend,  
They lose themselves in that, means to an end,  
The Many Old producing some One New,  
A Last unlike the First. If lies are true,  
The Caliph Haroun's man of brass receives  
A meal, ay, millet grains and lettuce leaves  
Together in his stomach rattle loose—  
You find them perfect next day to produce  
But ne'er expect the man, on strength of that,  
Can roll an iron camel-collar flat  
Like Haroun's self! I tell you, what was stored  
Parcel by parcel through his life, outpoured  
That eve, was, for that age, a novel thing:  
And round those three the People formed a ring,  
Suspended their own vengeance, chose await  
The issue of this strife to reinstate  
Them in the right of taking it—in fact  
He must be proved their lord ere they exact  
Amends for that lord's defalcation. Last,  
A reason why the phrases flowed so fast  
Was in his quite forgetting for the time  
Himself in his amazement that his rhyme  
Disguised the royalty so much: he there—  
They full face to him—and yet unaware

## SORDELLO

Who was the King and who . . . But if I lay  
 On thine my spirit and compel obey  
 His lord—Taurello? Impotent to build  
 Another Rome, but hardly so unskilled  
 In what such builder should have been as brook  
 One shame beyond the charge that he forsook  
 His function! Set me free that shame I bend  
 A brow before, suppose new years to spend,  
 Allow each chance, nor fruitlessly, recur—  
 Measure thee with the Minstrel, then, demur  
 At any crown he claims! That I must cede  
 As 'tis my right to my especial meed—  
 Confess you fitter help the world than I  
 Ordained its champion from eternity,  
 Is much: but to behold you scorn the post  
 I quit in your behalf—as aught's to boast  
 Unless you help the world! And while he rung  
 The changes on this theme, the roof up-sprung,  
 The sad walls of the presence-chamber died  
 Into the distance, or, embowering vied  
 With far-away Goito's vine-frontier;  
 And crowds of faces (only keeping clear  
 The rose-light in the midst, his vantage-ground  
 To fight their battle from) deep clustered round  
 Sordello, with good wishes no mere breath,  
 Kind prayers for him no vapour, since, come death,  
 Come life, he was fresh-sinewed every joint,  
 Each bone new-marrowed as whom Gods anoint  
 Though mortal to their rescue: now let sprawl  
 The snaky volumes hither, Typhon's all  
 For Hercules to trample—good report  
 From Salinguerra's only to extort?  
 So was I (closed he his inculcating  
 A poet must be earth's essential king)  
 So was I, royal so, and if I fail  
 'Tis not the royalty ye witness quail  
 But one deposed who, caring not exert  
 Its proper essence, trifled malapert  
 With accidents instead—good things assigned  
 The herald of a better thing behind—

## SORDELLO

And, worthy through display of these, put forth  
Never the inmost all-surpassing worth  
That constitutes him King precisely since  
As yet no other creature may evince  
Its like: the power he took most pride to test,  
Whereby all forms of life had been professed  
At pleasure, forms already on the earth,  
Was but a means to power whose novel birth  
Should, in its novelty, be kingship's proof—  
Now, whether he came near or kept aloof,  
Those forms unalterable first to last  
Proved him her copy, not the protoplast  
Of Nature: what would come of being free  
By action to exhibit tree for tree,  
Bird, beast for beast and bird, or prove earth bore  
A veritable man or woman more?  
Means to an end, such proofs; and what the end?  
Your essence, whatsoe'er it be, extend—  
Never contract! Already you include  
The multitude; now let the multitude  
Include yourself, and the result is new;  
Themselves before, the multitude turn you;  
This were to live and move and have (in them)  
Your being, and secure a diadem  
That's to transmit (because no cycle yearns  
Beyond itself, but on itself returns)  
When the full sphere in wane, the world o'erlaid  
Long since with you, shall have in turn obeyed  
Some orb still prouder, some displayer, still  
More potent than the last, of human Will,  
And some new King depose the old. Of such  
Am I—whom pride of this elates too much?  
Safe, rather say, mid troops of peers again;  
I, with my words, hailed brother of the train  
Once deeds sufficed: for, let the world roll back,  
Who fails, through deeds diverse so e'er, re-track  
My purpose still, my task? A teeming crust—  
Air, flame, earth, wave at conflict—see! Needs must  
Emerge some Calm embodied these refer  
(Saturn—no yellow-bearded Jupiter!)

## SORDELLO

The brawl to ; some existence like a pact  
And protest against Chaos, some first fact  
I' the faint of Time . . my deep of life, I know,  
Is unavailing e'en to poorly show  
(For here the Chief immeasurably yawned)  
Deeds in their due gradation till Song dawned—  
The fullest effluence of the finest mind  
All in degree, no way diverse in kind  
From those about us, minds which, more or less,  
Lofty or low, in moving seek impress  
Themselves on somewhat ; but one mind has climbed  
Step after step, by just ascent sublimed :  
Thought is the soul of act, and stage by stage,  
Is soul from body still to disengage  
As tending to a freedom which rejects  
Such help and incorporeally affects  
The world, producing deeds but not by deeds,  
Swaying, in others, frames itself exceeds,  
Assigning them the simpler tasks it used  
As patiently perform till Song produced  
Acts, by thoughts only, for the mind : divest  
Mind of e'en Thought, and, lo, God's unexpressed  
Will dawns above us. But so much to win  
Ere that ! A lesser round of steps within  
The last. About me, faces ! and they flock,  
The earnest faces. What shall I unlock  
By song ? behold me prompt, whate'er it be,  
To minister : how much can mortals see  
Of Life ? No more ? I covet the first task  
And marshall you Life's elemental Masque  
Of men, on evil or on good lay stress,  
This light, this shade make prominent, suppress  
All ordinary hues that softening blend  
Such natures with the level : apprehend  
Which evil is, which good, if I allot  
Your Hell, the Purgatory, Heaven ye wot,  
To those you doubt concerning : I enwomb  
Some wretched Friedrich with his red-hot tomb,  
Some dubious spirit, Lombard Agilulph .  
With the black chastening river I engulph ;



## SORDELLO

Some unapproached Matilda I enshrine  
With languors of the planet of decline—  
These fail to recognise, to arbitrate  
Between henceforth, to rightly estimate  
Thus marshalled in the Masque! Myself, the while,  
As one of you, am witness, shrink or smile  
At my own showing! Next age—what's to do?  
The men and women stationed hitherto  
Will I unstation, good and bad, conduct  
Each nature to its farthest or obstruct  
At soonest in the world: Light, thwarted, breaks  
A limpid purity to rainbow flakes,  
Or Shadow, helped, freezes to gloom: behold  
How such, with fit assistance to unfold,  
Or obstacles to crush them, disengage  
Their forms, love, hate, hope, fear, peace make, war  
wage,

In presence of you all! Myself implied  
Superior now, as, by the platform's side,  
Bidding them do and suffer to content  
The world . . . no—that I wait not—circumvent  
A few it has contented, and to these  
Offer unveil the last of mysteries  
I boast! Man's life shall have yet freer play:  
Once more I cast external things away  
And Natures, varied now, so decompose  
That . . . but enough! Why fancy how I rose,  
Or rather you advanced since evèrmore  
Yourselves effect what I was fain before  
Effect, what I supplied yourselves suggest,  
What I leave bare yourselves can now invest?  
How we attained to talk as brothers talk,  
In half-words, call things by half-names, no balk  
From discontinuing old aids—To-day  
Takes in account the work of Yesterday—  
Has not the world a Past now, its adept  
Consults ere he dispense with or accept  
New aids? a single touch more may enhance,  
A touch less turn to insignificance  
Those structures' symmetry the Past has strewed

## SORDELLO

Your world with, once so bare: leave the mere rude  
Explicit details, 'tis but brother's speech  
We need, speech where an accent's change gives each  
The other's soul—no speech to understand  
By former audience—need was then expand,  
Expatriate—hardly were they brothers! true—  
Nor I lament my less remove from you,  
Nor reconstruct what stands already: ends  
Accomplished turn to means: my art intends  
New structure from the ancient: as they changed  
The spoils of every clime at Venice, ranged  
The horned and snouted Lybian God, upright  
As in his desert, by some simple bright  
Clay cinerary pitcher—Thebes as Rome,  
Athens as Byzant rifled, till their Dome  
From Earth's reputed consummations razed  
A seal the all-transmuting Triad blazed  
Above. Ah, whose that fortune? ne'ertheless  
E'en he must stoop contented to express  
No tithe of what's to say—the vehicle  
Never sufficient—but his work is still  
For faces like the faces that select  
The single service I am bound effect  
Nor murmur, bid me, still as poet, bow  
Taurello to the Guelf cause, disallow  
The Kaiser's coming—which with heart, soul, strength,  
I labour for, this eve, who feel at length  
My past career's outrageous vanity  
And would (as vain amends) die, even die  
Now I first estimate the boon of life,  
So death might bow Taurello—sure this strife  
Is the last strife—the People my support.

My poor Sordello! what may we extort  
By this, I wonder? Palma's lighted eyes  
Turned to Taurello who, as past surprise,  
Began, You love him—what you'd say at large .  
If I say briefly? First your father's charge  
To me, his friend, peruse: I guessed indeed  
You were no stranger to the course decreed  
Us both: I leave his children to the saints:

## SORDELLO

As for a certain project, he acquaints  
The Pope with that, and offers him the best  
Of your possessions to permit the rest  
Go peaceably—to Ecelin, a stripe  
Of soil the cursed Vicentines will gripe,  
—To Alberic, a patch the Trevisan  
Clutches already; extricate who can  
Treville, Villarazzi, Puissolo,  
Cartiglione, Loria—all go,  
And with them go my hopes! 'Tis lost, then! Lost  
This eve, our crisis, and some pains it cost  
Procuring; thirty years—as good I'd spent  
Like our admonisher! But each his bent  
Pursues—no question, one might live absurd  
Oneself this while, by deed as he by word,  
Persisting to obtrude an influence where  
'Tis made account of much as . . . nay, you fare  
With twice the fortune, youngster—I submit,  
Happy to parallel my waste of wit  
With the renowned Sordello's—you decide  
A course for me—Romano may abide  
Romano,—Bacchus! Who'd suppose the dearth  
Of Ecelins and Alberics on earth?  
Say there's a thing in prospect, must disgrace  
Betide competitors? An obscure place  
Suits me—there wants youth, bustle, one to stalk  
And attitudinize—some fight, more talk,  
Most flaunting badges—'twere not hard make clear  
Since Friedrich's very purposes lie here  
—Here—pity they are like to lie! For me,  
Whose station's fixed unceremoniously  
Long since, small use contesting; I am but  
The liegeman, you are born the lieges—shut  
That gentle mouth now!—or resume your kin  
In your sweet self; Palma were Ecelin  
For me and welcome! Could that neck endure  
This bauble for a cumbrous garniture  
You should . . . or might one bear it for you?

Stay—

I have not been so flattered many a day

## SORDELLO

As by your pale friend—Bacchus! The least help  
Would lick the hind's fawn to a lion's whelp—  
His neck is broad enough—a ready tongue  
Beside—too writhled—but, the main thing, young--  
I could . . . why look ye!

And the badge was thrown  
Across Sordello's neck : this badge alone  
Makes you Romano's Head—the Lombard's Curb  
Turns on your neck which would, on mine, disturb  
My pauldron, said Taurello. A mad act,  
Nor dreamed about a moment since—in fact  
Not when his sportive arm rose for the nonce—  
But he had dallied overmuch, this once,  
With power: the thing was done, and he, aware  
The thing was done, proceeded to declare  
(So like a nature made to serve, excel  
In serving, only feel by service well)  
That he should make him all he said and more:  
As good a scheme as any: what's to pore  
At in my face? he asked—ponder instead  
This piece of news; you are Romano's Head—  
One cannot slacken pace so near the goal,  
Suffer my Azzo to escape heart-whole  
This time! For you there's Palma to espouse—  
For me, one crowning trouble ere I house  
Like my compeer.

On which ensued a strange  
And solemn visitation—mighty change  
O'er every one of them—each looked on each—  
Up in the midst a truth grew, without speech.  
And when the giddiness sank and the haze  
Subsided, they were sitting, no amaze,  
Sordello with the baldric on, his sire  
Silent though his proportions seemed aspire  
Momently; and, interpreting the thrill  
Nigh at its ebb, Palma you found was still  
Relating somewhat Adelaide confessed  
A year ago, while dying on her breast,  
Of a contrivance that Vicenza night,  
Her Ecelin had birth: their convoy's flight,

## SORDELLO

Cut off a moment, coiled inside the flame  
That wallowed like a dragon at his game  
The toppling city through—San Biagio rocks !  
And wounded lies in her delicious locks  
Retrude, the frail mother, on her face,  
None of her wasted, just in one embrace  
Covering her child : when, as they lifted her,  
Cleaving the tumult, mighty, mightier  
And mightiest Taurello's cry outbroke,  
Leapt like a tongue of fire that cleaves the smoke,  
Midmost to cheer his Mantuans onward—drown  
His colleague's clamour, Ecelin's up, down  
The disarray : failed Adelaide see then  
Who was the natural Chief, the Man of Men?  
Outstripping time her Ecelin burst swathe,  
Stood up with haggard eyes beyond the scathe  
From wandering after his heritage  
Lost once and lost for aye—what could engage  
That deprecating glance? A new Shape leant  
On a familiar Shape—gloatingly bent  
O'er his discomfiture ; 'mid wreaths it wore,  
Still one outflamed the rest—her child's before  
'Twas Salinguerra's for his child : scorn, hate  
Rage, startled her from Ecelin—too late !  
A moment's work, and rival's foot had spurned  
Never that brow to earth ! Ere sense returned—  
The act conceived, adventured, and complete,  
They stole away towards an obscure retreat  
Mother and child—Retrude's self not slain  
(Nor even here Taurello moved) though pain  
Was fled ; and what assured them most 'twas fled,  
All pain, was, if you raised the pale hushed head  
'Twould turn this way and that, waver awhile,  
And only settle into its old smile  
(Graceful as the disquieted water-flag  
Steadying itself, remarked they, in the quag  
On either side their path) when suffered look  
Downward : they marched : no sign of life once shook  
The company's close litter of crossed spears  
Till, as they reached Goito, a few tears

## SORDELLO

Slipt in the sunset from her long black lash,  
And she was gone. So far the action rash—  
No crime. They laid Retrude in the font  
Taurello's very gift, her child was wont  
To sit beneath—constant as eve he came  
To sit by its attendant girls the same  
As one of them. For Palma, she would blend  
With this magific spirit to the end  
That ruled her first—but scarcely had she dared  
To disobey the Adelaide who scared  
Her into vowing never to disclose  
A secret to her husband which so froze  
His blood at half recital she contrived  
To hide from him Taurello's infant lived  
Lest, by revealing that, himself should mar  
Romano's fortunes: and, a crime so far,  
Palma received that action: she was told  
Of Salinguerra's nature, and his cold  
Calm acquiescence in his lot! But free  
Impart the secret to Romano, she  
Engaged to repossess Sordello of  
His heritage, and hers, and that way doff  
The mask, but after years, long years!—while now  
Was not Romano's sign-mark on that brow?

Across Taurello's heart his arms were locked:  
And 'twas, when speak he did, as if he mocked  
The minstrel, who had not to move, he said,  
Nor stir—should Fate defraud him of a shred  
Of this son's infancy? much less of youth  
(Laughingly all this) which to aid, in truth,  
Himself, reserved on purpose, had not grown  
Old, not too old—'twas better keep alone  
Till now, and never idly meet till now:  
—Then, in the same breath, told Sordello how  
The intimations of this eve's event  
Were futile—Friedrich means advance to Trent,  
Thence to Verona, then to Rome—there stop—  
Tumble the Church down, institute a-top  
The Alps a Prefecture of Lombardy:  
—That's now—no prophesying what may be

## SORDELLO

Anon, beneath a monarch of the clime,  
Native of Gesi, passing his youth's prime  
At Naples. Tito bids my choice decide  
On whom . . .

Embrace him, madman! Palma cried  
Who through the laugh saw sweatdrops burst apace  
And his lips' blanching : he did not embrace  
Sordello, but he laid Sordello's hand  
On his own eyes, mouth, forehead.

Understand,  
This while Sordello was becoming flushed  
Out of his whiteness ; thoughts rushed, fancies  
rushed ;

He pressed his hand upon his head and signed  
Both should forbear him. Nay, the best's behind!  
Taurello laughed—not quite with the same laugh:  
The truth is, thus you scatter, ay, like chaff  
The Guelfs a despicable monk recoils  
From—nor expect a fickle Kaiser spoils  
Our triumph!—Friedrich? Think you I intend  
Friedrich shall reap the fruits of blood I spend  
And brain I waste? Think you the people clap  
Their hands at my out-hewing this wild gap  
For any Friedrich to fill up? 'Tis mine—  
That's yours: I tell you towards some such design  
Have I worked blindly, yes, and idly, yes,  
And for another, yes—but worked no less  
With instinct at my heart ; I else had swerved,  
While now—look round! My cunning has preserved  
Samminiato—that's a central place  
Secures us Florence, boy, in Pisa's case  
By land as she by sea ; with Pisa ours,  
And Florence, and Pistoia, one devours  
The land at leisure! Gloriously dispersed—  
Brescia, observe, Milan, Piacenza first  
That flanked us (ah, you know not!) in the March ;  
On these we pile, as keystone of our arch,  
Romagna and Bologna, whose first span  
Covered the Trentine and the Valsugan ;  
Sofia's Egna by Bolgiano's sure . . .

## SORDELLO

So he proceeded. Half of all this pure  
Delusion, doubtless, nor the rest too true,  
But what was undone he felt sure to do  
As ring by ring he wrung off, flung away  
The pauldron-rings to give his sword-arm play—  
Need of the sword now ! That would soon adjust  
Aught wrong at present ; to the sword intrust  
Sordello's whiteness, undersize : 'twas plain  
He hardly rendered right to his own brain—  
Like a brave hound men educate to pride  
Himself on speed or scent nor aught beside,  
As though he could not, gift by gift, match men !  
Palma had listened patiently : but when  
'Twas time expostulate, attempt withdraw  
Taurello from his child, she, without awe  
Took off his iron arms from, one by one,  
Sordello's shrinking shoulders, and, that done,  
Made him avert his visage and relieve  
Sordello (you might see his corslet heave  
The while) who, loose, rose—tried to speak—then  
sank :

They left him in the chamber—all was blank.

And even reeling down the castle-stair  
Taurello kept up, as though unaware  
Palma was guide to him, the old device  
—Something of Milan—how we muster thrice  
The Torriani's strength there—all along  
Our own Visconti cowed them—thus the song  
Continued even while she bade him stoop,  
Thrid somehow, by some glimpse of arrow-loop,  
The turnings to the gallery below,  
Where he stopped short as Palma let him go.  
When he had sate in silence long enough  
Splintering the stone bench, braving a rebuff  
She stopt the truncheon ; only to commence  
One of Sordello's poems, a pretence  
For speaking, some poor rhyme of Elys' hair  
And head that's sharp and perfect like a pear,  
So smooth and close are laid the few fine locks  
Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks



## SORDELLO

Sun-blanced the livelong Summer—from his worst  
Performance, the Goito, as his first :  
And that at end, conceiving from the brow  
And open mouth no silence would serve now,  
Went on to say the whole world loved that man  
And, for that matter, thought his face, tho' wan,  
Eclipsed the Count's—he sucking in each phrase  
As if an angel spoke : the foolish praise  
Ended, he drew her on his mailed knees, made  
Her face a frame-work with his hands, a shade,  
A crown, an aureole—there must she remain  
(Her little mouth compressed with smiling pain  
As in his gloves she felt her tresses twitch)  
To get the best look at, in fittest niche  
Dispose his saint; that done, he kissed her brow—  
Lauded her father for his treason now,  
He told her, only how could one suspect  
The wit in him? whose clansman, recollect,  
Was ever Salinguerra—she, the same,  
Romano and his lady—so might claim  
To know all, as she should—and thus begun  
Schemes with a vengeance, schemes on schemes, not  
one

Fit to be told that foolish boy, he said,  
But only let Sordello Palma wed,  
—Then !

"Twas a dim long narrow place at best :  
Midway a sole grate showed the fiery West  
As shows its corpse the world's end some split tomb—  
A gloom, a rift of fire, another gloom  
Faced Palma—but at length Taurello set  
Her free ; the grating held one ragged jet  
Of fierce gold fire : he lifted her within  
The hollow underneath—how else begin  
Fate's second marvellous cycle, else renew  
The ages than with Palma plain in view ?  
Then paced the passage, hands clenched, head erect,  
Pursuing his discourse ; a grand unchecked  
Monotony made out from his quick talk  
And the recurring noises of his walk ;

## SORDELLO

—Somewhat too much like the o'ercharged assent  
Of two resolved friends in one danger blent,  
Who hearten each the other against heart—  
Boasting there's nought to care for, when, apart  
The boaster, all's to care for: he, beside  
Some shape not visible, in power and pride  
Approached, out of the dark, ginglyly near,  
Nearer, passed close in the broad light, his ear  
Crimson, eyeballs suffused, temples full-fraught,  
Just a snatch of the rapid speech you caught,  
And on he strode into the opposite dark  
Till presently the harsh heel's turn, a spark  
I' the stone, and whirl of some loose embossed thong  
That crashed against the angle aye so long  
After the last, punctual to an amount  
Of mailed great paces you could not but count,  
Prepared you for the pacing back again:  
And by the snatches might you ascertain  
That, Friedrich's Prefecture surmounted, left  
By this alone in Italy, they cleft  
Asunder, crushed together, at command  
Of none, were free to break up Hildebrand,  
Rebuild, he and Sordello, Charlemagne—  
But garnished, Strength with Knowledge, if we deign  
Accept that compromise and stoop to give  
Rome law, the Cæsars' Representative.  
—Enough that the illimitable flood  
Of triumphs after triumphs, understood  
In its faint reflux (you shall hear) sufficed  
Young Ecelin for appanage, enticed  
Him till, these long since quiet in their graves,  
He found 'twas looked for that a long life's braves  
Should somehow be made good—so, weak and worn,  
Must stagger up at Milan, one grey morn  
Of the To-Come, to fight his latest fight.  
And Salinguerra's prophecy at height—  
He voluble with a raised arm and stiff,  
A blaring voice, a blazing eye, as if  
He had our very Italy to keep  
Or cast away, or gather in a heap

## SORDELLO

To garrison the better—ay, his word  
Was, “run the cucumber into a gourd,  
Drive Trent upon Apulia”—at their pitch  
Who spied the continents and islands which  
Grew sickles, mulberry leaflets in the map—  
(Strange that three such confessions so should hap  
To Palma Dante spoke with in the clear  
Amorous silence of the Swooning-sphere.  
Cunizza, as he called her! Never ask  
Of Palma more! She sate, knowing her task  
Was done, the labour of it—for success  
Concerned not Palma, passion’s votaress)  
Triumph at height, I say, Sordello crowned—  
Above the passage suddenly a sound  
Stops speech, stops walk: back shrinks Taurello, bide  
With large involuntary asking lids  
Palma interpret. ’Tis his own foot-stamp—  
Your hand! His summons! Nay, this idle damp  
Befits not. Out they two reeled dizzily:  
“Visconti’s strong at Milan,” resumed he  
In the old somewhat insignificant way  
(Was Palma wont years afterward to say)  
As though the spirit’s flight sustained thus far  
Dropped at that very instant. Gone they are—  
Palma, Taurello; Eglamor anon,  
Ecelin, Alberic . . . ah, Naddo’s gone!  
—Labours this moonrise what the Master meant  
“Is Squarcialupo speckled? —purulent  
I’d say, but when was Providence put out?  
He carries somehow handily about  
His spite nor fouls himself!” Goito’s vines  
Stand like a cheat detected—stark rough lines  
The moon breaks through, a grey mean scale against  
The vault where, this eve’s Maiden, thou remains’t  
Like some fresh martyr, eyes fixed—who can tell?  
As Heaven, now all’s at end, did not so well  
Spite of the faith and victory, to leave  
Its virgin quite to death in the lone eve:  
While the persisting hermit-bee . . . ha! wait  
No longer—these in compass, forward fate!

# SORDELLO

## BOOK THE SIXTH

The thought of Eglamor's least like a thought,  
And yet a false one, was, Man shrinks to nought  
If matched with symbols of immensity—  
Must quail, forsooth, before a quiet sky  
Or sea, too little for their quietude:  
And, truly, somewhat in Sordello's mood  
Confirmed its speciousness while evening sank  
Down the near terrace to the further bank,  
And only one spot left out of the night  
Glimmered upon the river opposite—  
A breadth of watery heaven like a bay,  
A sky-like space of water, ray for ray  
And star for star, one richness where they mixed  
As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,  
Tumultuary splendors folded in  
To die: nor turned he till Ferrara's din  
(Say, the monotonous speech from a man's lip  
Who lets some first and eager purpose slip  
In a new fancy's birth; the speech keeps on  
Though elsewhere its informing soul be gone)  
Aroused him—surely offered succour; fate  
Paused with this eve; ere she precipitate  
Herself . . . put off strange after-thoughts awhile,  
That voice, those large hands, that portentous smile. . .  
What help to pierce the Future as the Past  
Lay in the plaining city?

And at last .

The main discovery and prime concern,  
All that just now imported him to learn,  
His truth, like yonder slow moon to complete  
Heaven, rose again, and naked at his feet  
Lighted his old life's every shift and change,  
Effort with counter-effort; nor the range  
Of each looked wrong except wherein it checked  
Some other—which of these could he suspect

## SORDELLO

Prying into them by the sudden blaze?  
The real way seemed made up of all the ways—  
Mood after mood of the one mind in him;  
Tokens of the existence, bright or dim,  
Of a transcendent all-embracing sense  
Demanding only outward influence,  
A soul, in Palma's phrase, above his soul,  
Power to uplift his power, such moon's control,  
Over the sea-depths, and their mass had swept  
Onward from the beginning and still kept  
Its course; but years and years the sky above  
Held none, and so, untasked of any love,  
His sensitiveness idled, now amort,  
Alive now, and to sullenness or sport  
Given wholly up, disposed itself anew  
At every passing instigation, grew  
And dwindled at caprice, in foam-showers spilt,  
Wedge-like insisting, quivered now a gilt  
Shield in the sunshine, now a blinding race  
Of whitest ripples o'er the reef—found place  
For myriad charms; not gathered up and, hurled  
Right from its heart, encompassing the world.  
So had Sordello been, by consequence,  
Without a function: others made pretence  
To strengths not half his own, yet had some core  
Within, submitted to some moon, before  
It still, superior still whate'er its force,  
Were able therefore to fulfil a course  
Nor missed Life's crown, authentic attribute—  
To each who lives must be a certain fruit  
Of having lived in his degree, a stage  
Earlier or later in men's pilgrimage,  
To stop at; and to which those spirits tend  
Who, still discovering beauty without end,  
Amass the scintillations for one star  
—Something unlike them, self-sustained, afar,  
And meanwhile nurse the dream of being blest  
By winning it to notice and invest  
Their souls with alien glory some one day  
Whene'er the nucleus, gathering shape away,

## SORDELLO

Round to the perfect circle—soon or late  
According as themselves are formed to wait;  
Whether 'tis human beauty will suffice  
—The yellow hair and the luxurious eyes,  
Or human intellect seem best, or each  
Combine in some ideal form past reach  
On earth, or else some shade of these, some aim,  
Some love, hate even, take their place the same  
That may be served—all this they do not lose,  
Waiting for death to live, nor idly choose  
What Hell shall be—a progress thus pursued  
Through all existence, still above the food  
That's offered them, still towering beyond  
The widened range in virtue of their bond  
Of sovereignty: not that a Palma's Love  
A Salinguerra's Hate would equal prove  
To swaying all Sordello: wherefore doubt,  
Love meet for such a Strength, some Moon's without  
To match his Sea?—fear, Good so manifest,  
Only the Best breaks faith?—but that the Best  
Somehow eludes us ever, still might be  
And is not: crave you gems? where's penury  
Of their material round us? pliant earth,  
The plastic flame—what balks the Mage his birth  
—Jacynth in balls, or lodestone by the block?  
Flinders enrich the strand and veins the rock—  
No more! Ask creatures? Life in tempest, Thought  
Clothes the keen hill-top, mid-day woods are fraught  
With fervors . . . ah, these forms are well enough—  
But we had hoped, encouraged by the stuff  
Profuse at Nature's pleasure, Men beyond  
These Men! and thus, perchance, are over-fond  
In arguing, from Good the Best, from force  
Divided—force combined, an ocean's course  
From this our sea whose mere intestine pants  
Had seemed at times sufficient to our wants.  
—External Power? If none be adequate  
And he have been ordained (a prouder fate)  
A law to his own sphere? the need remove  
All incompleteness, be that law that love?

## SORDELLO

Nay, really such be others' laws, though veiled  
In mercy to each vision that had failed  
If unassisted by its Want, for lure,  
Embodied? stronger vision could endure  
The simple want—no bauble for a truth!  
The People were himself; and by the ruth  
At their condition was he less impelled  
Alter the discrepancy he beheld  
Than if, from the sound Whole, a sickly Part  
Subtracted were transformed, decked out with art,  
Then palmed on him as alien woe—the Guelf  
To succour, proud that he forsook himself?  
No: All's himself—all service, therefore, rates  
Alike, nor serving one part, immolates  
The rest: but all in time! That lance of yours  
Makes havoc soon with Malek and his Moors,  
That buckler's lined with many a Giant's beard  
Ere long, Porphyrio, be the lance but reared,  
The buckler wielded handsomely as now;  
But view your escort, bear in mind your vow,  
Count the pale tracts of sand to pass ere that,  
And, if you hope we struggle through this flat,  
Put lance and buckler up—next half-month lacks  
A sturdy exercise of mace or axe  
To cleave this dismal brake of prickly-pear  
That bristling holds Cydippe by the hair,  
Lames barefoot Agathon.

Oh, People, urge  
Your claims!—for thus he ventured to the verge  
Push a vain mummary which perchance distrust  
Of his fast-slipping resolution thrust  
No less: accordingly the Crowd—as yet  
He had unconsciously contrived forget  
To dwell upon the points . . . one might assuage  
The signal horrors sooner than engage  
With a dim vulgar vast unobvious grief  
Not to be fancied off, obtain relief  
In brilliant fits, cured by a happy quirk,  
But by dim vulgar vast unobvious work  
To correspond—however, forth they stood:

## SORDELLO

And now content thy stronger vision, brood  
On thy bare want; the grave stript turf by turf,  
Study the corpse-face thro' the taint-worms' scurf!

Down sank the People's Then; uprose their Now.  
These sad ones render service to! And how  
Piteously little must that service prove  
—Had surely proved in any case! for move  
Each other obstacle away, let youth  
Had been aware it had surprised a Truth  
'Twere service to impart—can Truth be seized,  
Settled forthwith, and of the captive eased  
Its captor look around, since this alit  
So happily, no gesture luring it,  
The earnest of a flock to follow? Vain,  
Most vain! a life's to spend ere this he chain,  
To the poor crowd's complacence; ere the crowd  
Pronounce it captured he descries a cloud  
Its kin of twice the plumage—he, in turn,  
If he shall live as many lives, may learn  
Secure—not otherwise. Then Mantua called  
Back to his mind how certain bards were thrall'd  
—Buds blasted, but of breaths more like perfumes  
Than Naddo's staring nosegay's carrion blooms  
Could boast—some rose that burnt heart out in sweets,  
A spendthrift in the Spring, no Summer greets—  
Some Dularete, drunk with truths and wine,  
Grown bestial dreaming how become divine.  
Yet to surmount this obstacle, commence  
With the commencement, merits crowning! Hence  
Must Truth be casual Truth, elicited  
In sparks so mean, at intervals disspread  
So rarely, that 'tis like at no one time  
Of the world's story has not Truth, the prime  
Of Truth, the very Truth which loosed had hurled  
Its course aright, been really in the world  
Content the while with some mean spark by dint  
Of some chance-blow, the solitary hint  
Of buried fire, which, rip its breast, would stream  
Sky-ward!

Sordello's miserable gleam



## SORDELLO

Was looked for at the moment: he would dash  
This badge to earth and all it brought, abash  
Taurello thus, perhaps persuade him wrest  
The Kaiser from his purpose; would attest  
His constancy in any case. Before  
He dashes it, however, think once more!  
For, was that little truly service? Ay—  
I' the end, no doubt; but meantime? Plain you spy  
Its ultimate Effect, but many flaws  
Of vision blur each intervening Cause;  
Were the day's fraction clear as the life's sum  
Of service, Now as filled as the To-come  
With evidence of good—nor too minute  
A share to vie with evil! How dispute  
The Guelfs were fittest maintain in rule?  
That made the life's work: not so easy school  
Your day's work—say, on natures circumstanced  
So variously, which yet, as each advanced  
Or might impede that Guelf rule, it behoved  
You, for the Then's sake, hate what Now you loved,  
Love what you hated; nor if one man bore  
Brand upon temples while his fellow wore  
The aureole, would it task us to decide—  
But portioned duly out, the Future vied  
Never with the unparcelled Present! Smite  
Or spare so much on warrant all so slight?  
The Present's complete sympathies to break,  
Aversions bear with, for a Future's sake  
So feeble? Tito ruined through one speck,  
The Legate saved by his sole lightish fleck?  
This were work, true—but work performed at cost  
Of other work—ought gained here, elsewhere lost—  
For a new segment spoil an orb half-done—  
Rise with the People one step, and sink . . . one?  
Would it were one step—less than the whole face—  
Of things our novel duty bids erase!  
Harms are to vanquish; what? the Prophet saith,  
The Minstrel singeth vainly then? Old faith,  
Old courage, born of the surrounding harms,  
Were not, from highest to the lowest, charms?

## SORDELLO

Oh, flame persists, but is not glare as staunch?  
Where the salt marshes stagnate, crystals branch—  
Blood dries to crimson—Evil's beautified  
In every shape! But Beauty thrust aside  
You banish Evil: wherefore? After all  
Is Evil our result less natural  
Than Good? For overlook the Season's strife  
With tree and flower—the hideous animal life,  
Of which who seeks shall find a grinning taunt  
For his solution, must endure the vaunt  
Of Nature's angel, as a child that knows  
Himself befooled, unable to propose  
Aught better than the fooling—and but care  
For Men, the varied People then and there,  
Of which 'tis easy saying Good and Ill  
Claim him alike! Whence rose the claim but still  
From Ill, the fruit of Ill—what else could knit  
Him theirs but Sorrow? Any free from it  
Were also free from him! A happiness  
Could be distinguished in this morning's press  
Of miseries—the fool's who passed a gibe  
On one said he, so wedded to his tribe  
He carries green and yellow tokens in  
His very face that he's a Ghibellin—  
Much hold on him that fool obtained! Nay mount  
Yet higher; and upon Men's own account  
Must Evil stay: for what is Joy? To heave  
Up one obstruction more, and common leave  
What was peculiar—by this act destroy  
Itself; a partial death is every joy;  
The sensible escape, enfranchisement  
Of a sphere's essence: once the vexed—content,  
The cramped—at large, the growing circle—round,  
All's to begin again—some novel bound  
To break, some new enlargement's to entreat,  
The sphere though larger is not more complete.  
Now for Mankind's experience: who alone  
Might style the unobstructed world his own?  
Whom palled Goito with its perfect things?  
Sordello's self; whereas for Mankind springs

## SORDELLO

Salvation—hindrances are interposed  
For them, not all Life's view at once disclosed  
To creatures sudden on its summit left  
With Heaven above and yet of wings bereft—  
But lower laid, as at the mountain's foot  
Where, range on range, the girdling forests shoot  
Between the prospect and the throngs who scale  
Earnestly ever, piercing veil by veil,  
Confirmed with each discovery; in their soul  
The Whole they seek by Parts—but, found that Whole,  
Could they revert? Oh, testify! The space  
Of time we judge so meagre to embrace  
The Parts, were more than plenty, once attained  
The Whole, to quite exhaust it: for nought's gained  
But leave to look—not leave to do: Beneath  
Soon sates the looker—look Above, then! Death  
Tempt's ere a tithe of Life be tasted. Live  
First, and die soon enough, Sordello! Give  
Body and spirit the bare right they claim  
To pasture thee on a voluptuous shame  
That thou, a pageant-city's denizen,  
Are neither vilely lodged midst Lombard men—  
Canst force joy out of sorrow, seem to truck  
Thine attributes away for sordid muck,  
Yet manage from that very muck educe  
Gold; then subject, nor scruple, to thy cruce  
The world's discardings; think, if ingots pay  
Such pains, the clods that yielded them are clay  
To all save thee, and clay remain though quenched  
Thy purging-fire; who's robbed then? Would I  
wrenched )

An ample treasure forth!—As 'tis, why crave  
A share that ruins me and will not save  
Yourselves?—imperiously command I quit  
The course that makes my joy nor will remit  
Your woe? Would all arrive at joy? Reverse  
The order (time instructs you) nor coerce  
Each unit till, some predetermined mode,  
The total be emancipate; our road  
Is one, our times of travel many; thwart

## SORDELLO

No enterprising soul's precocious start  
Before the general march; if slow or fast  
All straggle up to the same point at last,  
Why grudge my having gained a month ago  
The brakes at balm-shed, asphodels in blow,  
While you were landlocked? Speed your Then, but  
how

This badge would suffer me improve my Now!

His time of action for, against, or with  
Our world (I labour to extract the pith  
Of this and more) grew up, that even-tide,  
Gigantic with its power of joy beside  
The world's eternity of impotence  
To profit though at all his joy's expense.  
Make nothing of that time because so brief?  
Rather make more—instead of joy take grief  
Before its novelty have time subside;  
No time for the late savour—leave untried  
Virtue, the creaming honey wine, quick squeeze  
Vice like a biting spirit from the lees  
Of life—together let wrath, hatred, lust,  
All tyrannies in every shade be thrust  
Upon this Now, which time may reason out  
As mischiefs, far from benefits, no doubt—  
But long ere then Sordello will have slept  
Away—you teach him at Goito's crypt  
There's a blank issue to that fiery thrill!  
Stirring, the Few cope with the Many, still:  
So much of dust as, quiet, makes a mass  
Unable to produce three tufts of grass,  
Shall, troubled by the whirlwind, render void  
The whole calm glebe's endeavour: be employed  
And e'en though somewhat smarts the Crowd for this,  
Contributes each his pang to make up bliss,  
'Tis but one pang—one blood-drop to the bowl  
Which brimful tempts the sluggish asp uncowl  
So quick, stains ruddily the dull red cape,  
And, kindling orbs dull as the unripe grape  
Before, avails forthwith to disentrance  
The mischief—soon to lead a mystic dance

## SORDELLO

Among you! Nay, who sits alone in Rome?  
Have those great hands indeed hewn out a home  
For me—compelled to live? Oh Life, life-breath,  
Life-blood,—ere sleep be travail, life ere death!  
This life to feed my soul, direct, oblique,  
But always feeding! Hindrances? They pique—  
Helps? such . . . but wherefore say my soul o'ertops  
All height—than every depth profounder drops?  
Enough that I can live, and would live! Wait  
For some transcendent life reserved by Fate  
To follow this? Oh, never! Fate I trust  
The same my soul to; for, as who flings dust  
Perchance—so facile was the deed, she chequed  
The void with these materials to affect  
That soul diversely—these consigned anew  
To nought by death, why marvel if she threw  
A second and superber spectacle  
Before it? What may serve for sun—what still  
Wander a moon above me—what else wind  
About me like the pleasures left behind?  
And how shall some new flesh that is not flesh  
Cling to me? what's new laughter—soothes the fresh  
Sleep like sleep? Fate's exhaustless for my sake  
In brave resource, but whether bids she slake  
My thirst at this first rivulet or count  
No draught worth lip save from the rocky fount  
Above i' the clouds, while here she's provident  
Of (taste) loquacious pearl the soft tree-tent  
Guards, with its face of reate and sedge, nor fail  
The silver globules and gold-sparkling grail  
At bottom—Oh, 'twere too absurd to slight  
For the hereafter the to-day's delight!  
Quench thirst at this, then seek next well-spring—wear  
Home-lilies ere strange lotus in my hair!  
Here is the Crowd, whom I with freest heart  
Offer to serve, contented for my part  
To give this life up once for all, but grant  
I really serve; if otherwise, why want  
Aught further of me? Life they cannot chuse  
But set aside—wherefore should I refuse

## SORDELLO

The gift? I take it—I, for one, engage  
Never to falter through the pilgrimage—  
Or end it howling that the stock or stone  
Were enviable, truly: I, for one,  
Will praise the world you style mere anteroom  
To the true palace—but shall I assume  
—My foot the courtly gait, my tongue the trope,  
My eye the glance, before the doors fly ope  
One moment? What—with guarders row on row  
Gay swarms of varletry that come and go,  
Pages to dice with, waiting-girls unlace  
The plackets of, pert claimants help displace,  
Heart-heavy suitors get a rank for; laugh  
At yon sleet parasite, break his own staff  
Cross Beetle-brows the Usher's shoulder; why—  
Admitted to the presence by and bye,  
Should thought of these recurring make me grieve  
Among new sights I reach, old sights I leave?  
—Cool citrine-crystals, fierce pyropus-stone—  
Bare floor-work too!—But did I let alone  
That black-eyed peasant in the vestibule  
Once and for ever?—Floor-work? No such fool!  
Rather, were Heaven to forestal Earth, I'd say  
Must I be blessed or you? Then my own way  
Bless me—a firmer arm, a fleeter foot,  
I'll thank you, but to no mad wings transmute  
These limbs of mine—our greensward is too soft;  
Nor camp I on the thunder-cloud aloft—  
We feel the bliss distinctlier having thus  
Engines subservient, not mixed up with us—  
Better move palpably through Heaven—nor, freed  
Of flesh forsooth, from space to space proceed  
'Mid flying synods of worlds—but in Heaven's marge  
Show Titan still, recumbent o'er his targe  
Solid with stars—the Centaur at his game  
Made tremulously out in hoary flame!

Life! Yet the very cup whose extreme dull  
Dregs, even, I would quaff, was dashed, at full,  
Aside so oft; the death I fly, revealed  
So oft a better life this life concealed

## SORDELLO

And which sage, champion, martyr, thro' each path  
Have hunted fearlessly—the horrid bath,  
The crippling-irons and the fiery chair:  
—'Twas well for them; let me become aware  
As they, and I relinquish Life, too! Let  
Life's secret but disclose itself! Forget  
Vain ordinances, I have one appeal—  
I feel, am what I feel, know what I feel  
—So much is Truth to me—What Is then? Since  
One object viewed diversely may evince  
Beauty and ugliness—this way attract,  
That way repel, why gloze upon the fact?  
Why must a single of the sides be right?  
Who bids choose this and leave its opposite?  
No abstract Right for me—in youth endued  
With Right still present, still to be pursued,  
Thro' all the interchange of circles, rife  
Each with its proper law and mode of life,  
Each to be dwelt at ease in: thus to sway  
Regally with the Kaiser, or obey  
Implicit with his Serf of fluttering heart,  
Or, like a sudden thought of God's, to start  
Up in the presence, then go forth and shout  
That some should pick the unstrung jewels out—  
Were well!

And, as in moments when the Past  
Gave partially enfranchisement, he cast  
Himself quite thro' mere secondary states  
Of his soul's essence, little loves and hates,  
Into the mid vague yearnings overlaid  
By these; as who should pierce hill, plain, grove,  
glade,

And so into the very nucleus probe  
That first determined there exist a Globe:  
And as that's easiest half the globe dissolved,  
So seemed Sorello's closing-truth evolved  
In his flesh-half's break up—the sudden swell  
Of his expanding soul showed Ill and Well,  
Sorrow and Joy, Beauty and Ugliness  
Virtue and Vice, the Larger and the Less,

## SORDELLO

All qualities, in fine, recorded here,  
Might be but Modes of Time and this one Sphere,  
Urgent on these but not of force to bind  
As Time—Eternity, as Matter—Mind,  
If Mind, Eternity shall choose assert  
Their attributes within a Life: thus girt  
With circumstance, next change beholds them cinct  
Quite otherwise—with Good and Ill distinct,  
Joys, sorrows, tending to a like result—  
Contrived to render easy, difficult,  
This or the other course of . . . what new bond  
In place of flesh may stop their flight beyond  
Its new sphere, as that course does harm or good  
To its arrangements. Once this understood,  
As suddenly he felt himself alone,  
Quite out of Time and this World, all was known.  
What made the secret of the past despair?  
(Most imminent when he seemed most aware  
Of greatness in the Past—naught turned him mad  
Like craving to expand the power he had,  
Not a new power to be expanded)—just  
This made it; Soul on matter being thrust,  
'Tis Joy when so much Soul is wreaked in Time  
On Matter,—let the Soul attempt sublime  
Matter beyond its scheme and so prevent  
Or more or less that deed's accomplishment,  
And Sorrow follows: Sorrow to avoid—  
Let the Employer match the thing Employed,  
Fit to the finite his infinity,  
And thus proceed for ever, in degree  
Changed but in kind the same, still limited  
To the appointed circumstance and dead  
To all beyond: a sphere is but a sphere—  
Small, Great, are merely terms we bandy here—  
Since to the spirit's absoluteness all  
Are like: now of the present sphere we call  
Life, are conditions—take but this among  
Many; the Body was to be so long  
Youthful, no longer—but, since no control  
Tied to that Body's purposes his Soul,



## SORDELLO

It chose to understand the Body's trade  
More than the Body's self—had fain conveyed  
Its boundless, to the body's bounded lot—  
So, the soul permanent, the body not,—  
Scarce the one minute for enjoying here,  
The soul must needs instruct its weak compeer,  
Run o'er its capabilities and wring  
A joy thence it holds worth experiencing—  
Which, far from half discovered even,—lo,  
The minute's gone, the body's power's let go  
Apportioned to that joy's acquirement! Broke,  
Say, morning o'er the earth and all it woke—  
From the volcano's vapour-flag to hoist  
Black o'er the spread of sea, to the low moist  
Dale's silken barley-spikes sullied with rain,  
Swayed earthwards, heavily to rise again—  
(The Small a sphere as perfect as the Great  
To the Soul's absoluteness)—meditate  
On such an Autumn-morning's cluster-chord  
And the whole music it was framed afford,  
And, the chord's might discovered, what should pluck  
One string, the finger, was found palsy-struck.  
And then what marvel if the Spirit, shown  
A saddest sight—the Body lost alone  
Thro' its officious proffered help, deprived  
Of this and that enjoyment Fate contrived,  
Virtue, Good, Beauty, each allowed slip hence,—  
Vain gloriously were fain, for recompense,  
To stem the ruin even yet, protract  
The Body's term, supply the power it lacked  
From its infinity, compel it learn  
These qualities were only Time's concern,  
That Body may, with its assistance, barred—  
Advance the same, vanquished—obtain reward,  
Reap joy where sorrow was intended grow,  
Of Wrong made Right and turn Ill Good below—  
And the result is, the poor Body soon  
Sinks under what was meant a wondrous boon,  
Leaving its bright accomplice all aghast.

So much was plain then, proper in the Past;

## SORDELLO

To be complete for, satisfy the whole  
Series of spheres—Eternity, his soul  
Exceeded, so was incomplete for, each  
One sphere—our Time. But does our knowledge reach  
No farther? Is the cloud of hindrance broke  
But by the failing of the fleshly yoke,  
Its loves and hates, as now when they let soar  
The spirit, self-sufficient as before,  
Tho' but the single space that shall elapse  
'Twixt its enthrallment in new bonds perhaps?  
Must Life be ever but escaped, which should  
Have been enjoyed? nay, might have been and would,  
Once ordered rightly, and a Soul's no whit  
More than the Body's purpose under it  
(A breadth of watery heaven like a bay,  
A sky-like space of water, ray for ray  
And star for star, one richness where they mixed  
As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,  
Tumultuary splendours folded in  
To die) and which thus, far from first begin  
Exciting discontent, but surest quelled  
The Body if aspiring it rebelled.  
But how so order Life? Still brutalize  
The soul, the sad world's method—muffled eyes  
To all that was before, shall after be  
This sphere—and every other quality  
Save some sole and immutable Great and Good  
And Beauteous whither fate has loosed its hood  
To follow? Never may some soul see All  
—The Great before and after and the Small  
Now, yet be saved by this the simplest lore,  
And take the single course prescribed before,  
As the king-bird with ages on his plumes  
Travels to die in his ancestral glooms?  
But where descry the Love that shall select  
That course? Here is a Soul whom to affect  
Nature has plied with all her means—from trees  
And flowers—e'en to the Multitude . . . and these  
Decides he save or no? One word to end!

Ah my Sordello, I this once befriend

## SORDELLO

And speak for you. A Power above him still  
Which, utterly incomprehensible,  
Is out of rivalry, which thus he can  
Love, tho' unloving all conceived by Man—  
What need! And of—none the minutest duct  
To that out-Nature, nought that would instruct  
And so let rivalry begin to live—  
But of a Power its representative  
Who, being for authority the same,  
Communication different, should claim  
A course the first chose and this last revealed—  
This Human clear, as that Divine concealed—  
The utter need!

What has Sordello found?

Or can his spirit go the mighty round  
At length, end where our souls begun? as, says  
Old fable, the two doves were sent two ways  
About the world—where in the midst they met  
Tho' on a shifting waste of sand, men set  
Jove's temple? Quick, what has Sordello found?  
For they approach—approach—that foot's rebound . . .  
Palma? No, Salinguerra tho' in mail;  
They mount, have reached the threshold, dash the veil  
Aside—and you divine who sat there dead  
Under his foot the badge; still, Palma said,  
A triumph lingering in the wide eyes  
Wider than some spent swimmer's if he spies  
Help from above in his extreme despair  
And, head far back on shoulder thrust, turns there  
With short and passionate cry; as Palma prest  
In one great kiss her lips upon his breast  
It beat. By this the hermit-bee has stopped  
His day's toil at Goito—the new cropped  
Dead vine-leaf answers, now 'tis eve, he bit,  
Twirled so, and filed all day—the mansion's fit—  
God counselled for; as easy guess the word  
That passed betwixt them and become the third  
To the soft small unfrighted bee, as tax  
Him with one fault—so one remembrance racks  
Of the stone maidens and the font of stone

## SORDELLO

He, creeping thro' the crevice, leaves alone—  
Alas, my friend—Alas Sordello! whom  
Anon we laid within that cold font-tomb—  
And yet again alas!

And now is't worth  
Our while bring back to mind, much less set forth  
How Salinguerra extricates himself  
Without Sordello? Ghibellin and Guelf  
May fight their fiercest? If Count Richard sulked  
In durance or the Marquis paid his mulct,  
Who cares, Sordello gone? The upshot, sure,  
Was peace; our chief made some frank overture  
That prospered; compliment fell thick and fast  
On its disposer, and Taurello passed  
With foe and friend for an outstripping soul  
Nine days at least: then, fairly reached the goal,  
He, by one effort, blotted the great hope  
Out of his mind, no further tried to cope  
With Este that mad evening's style, but sent  
Away the Legate and the League, content  
No blame at least the brothers had incurred,  
—Despatched a message to the Monk he heard  
Patiently first to last, scarce shivered at,  
Then curled his limbs up on his wolfskin mat  
And ne'er spoke more,—informed the Ferrarese  
He but retained their rules so long as these  
Lingered in pupilage—and last, no mode  
Apparent else of keeping safe the road  
From Germany direct to Lombardy  
For Friedrich, none, that is, to guarantee  
The faith and promptitude of who should next  
Obtain Sofia's dowry, sore perplexed—  
(Sofia being youngest of the tribe  
Of daughters Ecelin was wont to bribe  
The envious magnates with—nor since he sent  
Enrico Egna this fair child had Trent  
Once failed the Kaiser's purposes—we lost  
Egna last year, and who takes Egna's post—  
Opens the Lombard gate if Friedrich knock?)  
Himself espoused the Lady of the Rock

## SORDELLO

In pure necessity, and so destroyed  
His slender last of chances, quite made void  
Old prophecy, and spite of all the schemes  
Overt and covert, youth's deeds, age's dreams,  
Was sucked into Romano: and so hushed  
He up this evening's work, that when, 'twas brushed  
Somehow against by a blind chronicle  
Which, chronicling whatever woe befell  
Ferrara, scented this the obscure woe  
And "Salinguerra's sole son Giacomo  
Deceased, fatuous and doting, ere his Sire,"  
The townsfolk rubbed their eyes, could but admire  
Which of Sofia's five he meant. The chaps  
Of his dead hope were tardy to collapse,  
Obliterated not the beautiful  
Distinctive features at a crash—scarce dull  
Next year, as Azzo, Boniface withdrew  
Each to his stronghold; then (securely too  
Ecelin at Campese slept—close by  
Who likes may see him in Solagna lie  
With cushioned head and gloved hand to denote  
The Cavalier he was)—then his heart smote  
Young Ecelin, conceive! Long since adult,  
And, save Vicenza's business, what result  
In blood and blaze? so hard 'twas intercept  
Sordello till Sordello's option! Stept  
Its lord on Lombardy—for in the nick  
Of time when he at last and Alberic  
Closed with Taurello, came precisely news  
That in Verona half the souls refuse  
Allegiance to the Marquis and the Count—  
Have cast them from a throne they bid him mount,  
Their Podestà, thro' his ancestral worth:  
Ecelin flew there, and the town henceforth  
Was wholly his—Taurello sinking back  
From temporary station to a track  
That suited: news received of this acquist,  
Friedrich did come to Lombardy—who missed  
Taurello? Yet another year—they took  
Vicenza, left the Marquis scarce a nook

## SORDELLO

For refuge, and, when hundreds two or three  
After conspired to call themselves "the Free,"  
Opposing Alberic, these Bassanese,  
(Without Sordello!)—Ecelin at ease  
Slaughtered them so observably that oft  
A little Salinguerra looked with soft  
Blue eyes up, asked his sire the proper age  
To get appointed his proud uncle's page:  
More years passed, and that sire was dwindled down  
To a mere showy turbulent soldier, grown  
Better through age, his parts still in repute,  
Subtle—how else?—but hardly so astute  
As his contemporaneous friends professed—  
Undoubtedly a brawler—for the rest,  
Known by each neighbour, so allowed for, let  
Keep his incorrigible ways, nor fret  
Men who had missed their boyhood's bugbear—trap  
The ostrich, suffer our bald osprey flap  
A battered pinion—was the word. In fine,  
One flap too much and Venice's marine  
Was meddled with; no overlooking that!  
We captured him in his Ferrara, fat  
And florid at a banquet, more by fraud  
Than force, to speak the truth—there's slender laud  
Ascribed you for assisting eighty years  
To pull his death on such a man—fate shears  
The life-cord prompt enough whose last fine threads  
You fritter: so, presiding his board-head,  
A great smile your assurance all went well  
With Friedrich (as if he were like to tell!)  
In rushed (a plan contrived before) our friends,  
Made some pretence at fighting, just amends  
For the shame done his eighty years—apart  
The principle, none found it in his heart  
To be much angry with Taurello—gained  
Our galleys with the prize, and what remained  
But carry him to Venice for a show?  
—Set him, as 'twere, down gently—free to go  
His gait, inspect our square, pretend observe  
The swallows soaring their eternal curve

## SORDELLO

'Twixt Theodore and Mark, if citizens  
Gathered importunately, fives and tens,  
To point their children the Magnifico,  
All but a monarch once in firm-land, go  
His gait among us now—it took, indeed,  
Fully this Ecelin to supersede  
That man, remarked the seniors. Singular  
Sordello's inability to bar  
Rivals the stage, that evening, mainly brought  
About by his strange disbelief that aught  
Was to be done, should fairly thrust the Twain  
Under Taurello's tutelage, that, brain  
And heart and hand, he forthwith in one rod  
Indissolubly bound to baffle God  
Who loves the world—should thus allow the thin  
Grey wizened dwarfish devil Ecelin,  
And massy-muscled big-boned Alberic  
(Mere man, alas) to put his problem quick  
To demonstration—prove wherever's will  
To do, there's plenty to be done, or ill  
Or good: anointed, then, to rend and rip—  
Kings of the gag and flesh-hook, screw and whip,  
They plagued the world: a touch of Hildebrand  
(So far from obsolete!) made Lombards band  
Together, cross their coats as for Christ's cause,  
And saving Milan win the world's applause.  
Ecelin perished: and I think grass grew  
Never so pleasant as in Valley Rù  
By San Zenon where Alberic in turn  
Saw his exasperated captors burn  
Seven children with their mother, and, regaled  
So far, tied on to a wild horse, was trailed  
To death through raunce and bramble-bush: I take  
God's part and testify that mid the brake  
Wild o'er his castle on Zenone's knoll  
You hear its one tower left, a belfry, toll—  
Cherups the contumacious grasshopper,  
Rustles the lizard and the cushats chirre  
Above the ravage: there, at deep of day  
A week since, heard I the old Canon say

## SORDELLO

He saw with his own eyes a barrow burst  
And Alberic's huge skeleton unheard  
Five years ago, no more: he added, June's  
A month for carding off our first cocoons  
The silkworms fabricate—a double news,  
Nor he nor I could tell the worthier. Choose!

And Naddo gone, all's gone; not Eglamor!  
Believe I knew the face I waited for,  
A guest my spirit of the golden courts:  
Oh strange to see how, despite ill-reports,  
Disuse, some wear of years, that face retained  
Its joyous look of love! Suns waxed and waned,  
And still my spirit held an upward flight,  
Spiral on spiral, gyres of life and light  
More and more gorgeous—ever that face there  
The last admitted! crossed, too, with some care  
As perfect triumph were not sure for all,  
But on a few enduring damp must fall,  
A transient struggle, haply a painful sense  
Of the inferior nature's clinging—whence  
Slight starting tears easily wiped away,  
Fine jealousies soon stifled in the play  
Of irrepressible admiration—not  
Aspiring, all considered, to their lot  
Who ever, just as they prepare ascend  
Spiral on spiral, wish thee well, impend  
Thy frank delight at their exclusive track,  
That upturned fervid face and hair put back!

Is there no more to say? He of the rhymes—  
Many a tale of this retreat betimes  
Was born: Sordello die at once for men?  
The Chroniclers of Mantua tired their pen  
Relating how a Prince Visconti saved  
Mantua and elsewhere notably behaved—  
Who thus by fortune's ordering events  
Passed with posterity to all intents  
For just the God he never could become:  
As Knight, Bard, Gallant, men were never dumb  
In praise of him: while what he should have been,  
Could be, and was not—the one step too mean



## SORDELLO

For him to take, we suffer at this day  
Because of; Ecelin had pushed away  
Its chance ere Dante could arrive to take  
That step Sordello spurned, for the world's sake.  
He did much—but Sordello's step was gone.  
Thus had Sordello ta'en that step alone,  
Apollo had been compassed—'twas a fit  
He wished should go to him, not he to it  
—As one content to merely be supposed  
Singing or fighting elsewhere, while he dozed  
Really at home—and who was chiefly glad  
To have achieved the few real deeds he had  
Because that way assured they were not worth  
Doing, so spared from doing them henceforth—  
A tree that covets fruitage and yet tastes  
Never itself, itself—had he embraced  
Our cause then, Men had plucked Hesperian fruit  
And, praising that, just thrown him in to boot  
All he was anxious to appear but scarce  
Solicitous to be: a sorry farce  
Such life is after all—cannot I say  
He lived for some one better thing? this way—  
Lo, on a heathy brown and nameless hill  
By sparkling Asolo, in mist and chill,  
Morning just up, higher and higher runs  
A child barefoot and rosy—See! the sun's  
On the square castle's inner-court's green wall  
—Like the chine of some fossil animal  
Half turned to earth and flowers; and thro' the haze  
(Save where some slender patches of grey maize,  
Are to be overleaped) that boy has crost  
The whole hill-side of dew and powder-frost  
Matting the balm and mountain camomile:  
Up and up goes he, singing all the while  
Some unintelligible words to beat  
The lark, God's poet, swooning at his feet  
So worsted is he at the few fine locks  
Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks  
Sunblanched the livelong summer.—All that's left  
Of the Goito lay! And thus bereft,

## SORDELLO

Sleep and forget, Sordello . . . in effect  
He sleeps, the feverish poet—I suspect  
Not utterly companionless; but, friends,  
Wake up; the ghost's gone, and the story ends  
I'd fain hope, sweetly—seeing, peri or ghoul,  
That spirits are conjectured fair or foul,  
Evil or good, judicious authors think,  
According as they vanish in a stink  
Or in a perfume: friends be frank; ye snuff  
Civet, I warrant: really? Like enough—  
Merely the savour's rareness—any nose  
May ravage with impunity a rose—  
Rifle a musk-pod and 'twill ache like yours:  
I'd tell you that same pungency ensures  
An after-gust—but that were overbold:  
Who would has heard Sordello's story told.

THE END

**PIPPA PASSES**

**A DRAMA**

**I DEDICATE**

**MY BEST INTENTIONS, IN THIS POEM, MOST ADMIRINGLY**

**TO THE AUTHOR OF "ION,"—**

**MOST AFFECTIONATELY TO**

**MR. SERJEANT TALFOURD.**

**R.B.**

## PIPPA PASSES

NEW YEAR'S DAY AT ASOLO IN THE TREVISAN.—A  
*large, mean, airy chamber. A girl, PIPPA, from the  
silk-mills, springing out of bed.*

DAY!

Faster and more fast,  
O'er night's brim, day boils at last;  
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim  
Where spurting and supprest it lay—  
For not a froth-flake touched the rim  
Of yonder gap in the solid gray  
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away;  
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,  
Till the whole sunrise, not to be supprest,  
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast  
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the  
world.

Oh, Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee,  
A mite of my twelve hours' treasure,  
The least of thy gazes or glances,  
(Be they grants thou art bound to, or gifts above  
measure)  
One of thy choices, or one of thy chances,  
(Be they tasks God imposed thee, or freaks at thy  
pleasure)  
—My Day, if I squander such labour or leisure,  
Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me!

Thy long blue solemn hours serenely flowing,  
Whence earth, we feel, gets steady help and good—

## PIPPA PASSES

Thy fitful sunshine minutes, coming, going,  
In which, earth turns from work in gamesome mood—  
All shall be mine! But thou must treat me not  
As the prosperous are treated, those who live  
At hand here, and enjoy the higher lot,  
In readiness to take what thou wilt give,  
And free to let alone what thou refusest;  
For, Day, my holiday, if thou ill-usest  
Me, who am only Pippa—old-year's sorrow,  
Cast off last night, will come again to-morrow—  
Whereas, if thou prove gentle, I shall borrow  
Sufficient strength of thee for new-year's sorrow.  
All other men and women that this earth  
Belongs to, who all days alike possess,  
Make general plenty cure particular dearth,  
Get more joy, one way, if another, less:  
Thou art my single day, God lends to leaven  
What were all earth else, with a feel of heaven;  
Sole light that helps me through the year, thy sun's!  
Try, now! Take Asolo's Four Happiest Ones—  
And let thy morning rain on that superb  
Great haughty Ottima; can rain disturb  
Her Sebald's homage? All the while thy rain  
Beats fiercest on her shrub-house window-pane,  
He will but press the closer, breathe more warm  
Against her cheek; how should she mind the storm?  
And, morning past, if mid-day shed a gloom  
O'er Jules and Phene,—what care bride and groom  
Save for their dear selves? 'Tis their marriage-day;  
And while they leave church, and go home their way  
Hand clasping hand,—within each breast would be  
Sunbeams and pleasant weather spite of thee!  
Then, for another trial, obscure thy eve  
With mist,—will Luigi and his mother grieve.—  
The Lady and her child, unmatched, forsooth,  
She in her age, as Luigi in his youth,  
For true content? The cheerful town, warm, close,  
And safe, the sooner that thou art morose  
Receives them! And yet once again, outbreak  
In storm at night on Monsignor, they make

## PIPPA PASSES

Such stir about,—whom they expect from Rome  
To visit Asolo, his brothers' home,  
And say here masses proper to release  
A soul from pain,—what storm dares hurt his  
peace?

Calm would he pray, with his own thoughts to ward  
Thy thunder off, nor want the angels' guard!

But Pippa—just one such mischance would spoil  
Her day that lightens the next twelvemonth's toil  
At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil!

And here I let time slip for nought!  
Aha,—you foolhardy sunbeam—caught  
With a single splash from my ewer!  
You that would mock the best pursuer,  
Was my basin over-deep?

One splash of water ruins you asleep,  
And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits  
Wheeling and counterwheeling,  
Reeling, broken beyond healing—  
Now grow together on the ceiling!  
That will task your wits!  
Whoever quenched fire first, hoped to see  
Morsel after morsel flee

As merrily, as giddily . . .

Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on,  
Where settles by degrees the radiant cripple?  
Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon?  
New-blown and ruddy as St. Agnes' nipple,  
Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk bird's poll!  
Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the ripple  
Of ocean, bud there,—fairies watch unroll  
Such turban-flowers; I say, such lamps disperse  
Thick red flame through that dusk green universe!

I am queen of thee, floweret;

And each fleshy blossom

Preserve I not—(safer

Than leaves that embower it,

Or shells that embosom)

—From weevil and chafer?

Laugh through my pane, then; solicit the bee;

## PIPPA PASSES

Gibe him, be sure; and, in midst of thy glee,  
Love thy queen, worship me!

—Worship whom else? For am I not, this day,  
Whate'er I please? What shall I please to-day?  
My morning, noon, eve, night—how spend my day?  
To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds silk,  
The whole year round, to earn just bread and milk:  
But, this one day, I have leave to go,  
And play out my fancy's fullest games;  
I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—  
That I taste of the pleasures, am called by the names  
Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo!

See! Up the Hill-side yonder, through the morning,  
Some one shall love me, as the world calls love:  
I am no less than Ottima, take warning!  
The gardens, and the great stone house above,  
And other house for shrubs, all glass in front,  
Are mine; where Sebald steals, as he is wont,  
To court me, while old Luca yet reposes;  
And therefore, till the shrub-house door encloses,  
I . . . what, now?—give abundant cause for prate  
About me—Ottima, I mean—of late,  
Too bold, too confident she'll still face down  
The spitefullest of talkers in our town—  
How we talk in the little town below!  
But love, love, love—there's better love, I know!  
This foolish love was only day's first offer;  
I choose my next love to defy the scoffer:  
For do not our Bride and Bridegroom sally  
Out of Possagno church at noon?  
Their house looks over Orcana valley—  
Why should I not be the bride as soon  
As Ottima? For I saw, beside,  
Arrive last night that little bride—  
Saw, if you call it seeing her, one flash  
Of the pale, snow-pure cheek and black bright tresses,  
Blacker than all except the black eyelash;  
I wonder she contrives those lids no dresses!



## PIPPA PASSES

—So strict was she, the veil  
Should cover close her pale  
Pure cheeks—a bride to look at and scarce touch,  
Scarce touch, remember, Jules!—for are not such  
Used to be tended, flower-like, every feature,  
As if one's breath would fray the lily of a creature?  
A soft and easy life these ladies lead!  
Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed—

Oh, save that brow its virgin dimness,  
Keep that foot its lady primness,  
Let those ancles never swerve  
From their exquisite reserve,  
Yet have to trip along the streets like me,  
All but naked to the knee!  
How will she ever grant her Jules a bliss  
So startling as her real first infant kiss?  
Oh, no—not envy, this!

—Not envy, sure!—for if you gave me  
Leave to take or to refuse,  
In earnest, do you think I'd choose  
That sort of new love to enslave me?  
Mine should have lapped me round from the beginning;  
As little fear of losing it as winning!  
Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their wives,  
And only parents' love can last our lives:  
At eve the son and mother, gentle pair,  
Commune inside our Turret; what prevents  
My being Luigi? while that mossy lair  
Of lizards through the winter-time, is stirred  
With each to each imparting sweet intents  
For this new-year, as brooding bird to bird—  
(For I observe of late, the evening walk  
Of Luigi and his mother, always ends  
Inside our ruined turret, where they talk,  
Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than friends)  
Let me be cared about, kept out of harm,  
And schemed for, safe in love as with a charm;  
Let me be Luigi! . . . If I only knew  
What was my mother's face—my father, too:

## PIPPA PASSES

Nay, if you come to that, best love of all  
Is God's; then why not have God's love befall  
Myself as, in the Palace by the Dome,  
Monsignor?—who to-night will bless the home  
Of his dead brother; and God will bless in turn  
That heart which beats, those eyes which mildly burn  
With love for all men: I, to-night at least,  
Would be that holy and beloved priest!

Now wait!—even I already seem to share  
In God's love: what does New-year's hymn declare?  
What other meaning do these verses bear?

*All service ranks the same with God:  
If now, as formerly He trod  
Paradise, His presence fills  
Our earth, each only as God wills  
Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,  
Are we; there is no last nor first.*

*Say not a "small event?" Why "small?"  
Costs it more pain than this, ye call  
A "great event," should come to pass,  
Than that? Untwine me from the mass  
Of deeds which make up life, one deed  
Power shall fall short in, or exceed!*

And more of it, and more of it!—oh, yes—  
I will pass by, and see their happiness,  
And envy none—being just as great, no doubt,  
Useful to men, and dear to God, as they!  
A pretty thing to care about  
So mightily, this single holiday!

But let the sun shine! Wherefore repine?  
—With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,  
Down the grass-path grey with dew,  
Under the pine-wood, blind with boughs,  
Where the swallow never flew  
As yet, nor cicale dared carouse—  
Dared carouse!

[*She enters the street*

## PIPPA PASSES

I.—MORNING. *Up the Hill-side, inside the Shrub-house. LUCA'S Wife, OTTIMA, and her Paramour, the German SEBALD.*

*Seb. (sings.) Let the watching lids wink!  
Day's a-blaze with eyes, think—  
Deep into the night, drink!*

*Otti.* Night? Such may be your Rhine-land nights,  
perhaps;

But this blood-red beam through the shutter's chink,  
—We call such light, the morning's: let us see!  
Mind how you grope your way, though! How these  
tall

Naked geraniums straggle! Push the lattice—  
Behind that frame!—Nay, do I bid you?—Sebald,  
It shakes the dust down on me! Why, of course  
The slide-bolt catches.—Well, are you content,  
Or must I find you something else to spoil?  
Kiss and be friends, my Sebald! Is it full morning?  
Oh, don't speak then!

*Seb.* Ay, thus it used to be!  
Ever your house was, I remember, shut  
Till mid-day—I observed that, as I strolled  
On mornings thro' the vale here: country girls  
Were noisy, washing garments in the brook—  
Hinds drove the slow white oxen up the hills—  
But no, your house was mute, would ope no eye—  
And wisely—you were plotting one thing there,  
Nature, another outside: I looked up—  
Rough white wood shutters, rusty iron bars,  
Silent as death, blind in a flood of light;  
Oh, I remember!—and the peasants laughed  
And said, "The old man sleeps with the young wife!"  
This house was his, this chair, this window—his!

*Otti.* Ah, the clear morning! I can see St. Mark's:  
That black streak is the belfry. Stop: Vicenza  
Should lie . . . There's Padua, plain enough, that blue!  
Look o'er my shoulder—follow my finger—

## PIPPA PASSES

*Seb.*

Morning?

It seems to me a night with a sun added:  
Where's dew? where's freshness? That bruised plant,  
I bruised  
In getting thro' the lattice yestereve,  
Droops as it did. See, here's my elbow's mark  
In the dust on the sill.

*Otti.*

Oh, shut the lattice, pray!

*Seb.* Let me lean out. I cannot scent blood here,  
Foul as the morn may be—

There, shut the world out!

How do you feel now, Ottima? There—curse!  
The world, and all outside! Let us throw off  
This mask: how do you bear yourself? Let's out  
With all of it!

*Otti.*

Best never speak of it.

*Seb.* Best speak again and yet again of it,  
Till words cease to be more than words. "His blood,"  
For instance—let those two words mean "His blood"  
And nothing more. Notice—I'll say them now,  
"His blood."

*Otti.*

Assuredly if I repented

The deed—

*Seb.*

Repent? who should repent, or why?

What puts that in your head? Did I once say  
That I repented?

*Otti.*

No—I said the deed—

*Seb.* "The deed," and "the event"—just now it was  
"Our passion's fruit"—the devil take such cant!  
Say, once and always, Luca was a wittol,  
I am his cut-throat, you are—

*Otti.*

Here is the wine—

I brought it when we left the house above—  
And glasses too—wine of both sorts. Black? white,  
then?

*Seb.* But am not I his cut-throat? What are you?

*Otti.* There, trudges on his business from the Duomo  
Benet the Capuchin, with his brown hood  
And bare feet—always in one place at church,  
Close under the stone wall by the south entry;

## PIPPA PASSES

I used to take him for a brown cold piece  
Of the wall's self, as out of it he rose  
To let me pass—at first, I say, I used—  
Now—so has that dumb figure, fastened on me—  
I rather should account the plastered wall  
A piece of him, so chilly does it strike.  
This, Sebald?

*Seb.* No—the white wine—the white wine!  
Well, Ottima, I promised no new year  
Should rise on us the ancient shameful way,  
Nor does it rise: pour on! To your black eyes!  
Do you remember last damned New Year's day?

*Otti.* You brought those foreign prints. We looked  
at them  
Over the wine and fruit. I had to scheme  
To get him from the fire. Nothing but saying  
His own set wants the proof-mark, roused him up  
To hunt them out.

*Seb.* 'Faith, he is not alive  
To fondle you before my face!

*Otti.* Do you  
Fondle me, then! who means to take your life  
For that, my Sebald?

*Seb.* Hark you, Ottima,  
One thing's to guard against. We'll not make much  
One of the other—that is, not make more  
Parade of warmth, childish officious coil,  
Than yesterday—as if, sweet, I supposed  
Proof upon proof was needed now, now first,  
To show I love you—yes, still love you—love you  
In spite of Luca and what's come to him  
—Sure sign we had him ever in our thoughts,  
White sneering old reproachful face and all!  
We'll even quarrel, love, at times, as if  
We still could lose each other—were not tied  
By this—conceive you?

*Otti.* Love—

*Seb.* Not tied so sure—  
Because tho' I was wrought upon—have struck  
His insolence back into him—am I

## PIPPA PASSES

So surely yours?—therefore, forever yours?

*Otti.* Love, to be wise, (one counsel pays another)  
Should we have—months ago—when first we loved,  
For instance that May morning we two stole  
Under the green ascent of sycamores—  
If we had come upon a thing like that  
Suddenly—

*Seb.* “A thing” . . there again—“a thing!

*Otti.* Then, Venus’ body, had we come upon  
My husband Luca Gaddi’s murdered corpse  
Within there, at his couch-foot, covered close—  
Would you have pored upon it? Why persist  
In poring now upon it? For ’tis here—  
As much as there in the deserted house—  
You cannot rid your eyes of it: for me,  
Now he is dead I hate him worse—I hate—  
Dare you stay here? I would go back and hold  
His two dead hands, and say, I hate you worse  
Luca, than—

*Seb.* Off, off; take your hands off mine!  
’Tis the hot evening—off! oh, morning, is it?

*Otti.* There’s one thing must be done—you know  
what thing.

Come in and help to carry. We may sleep  
Anywhere in the whole wide house to-night.

*Seb.* What would come, think you, if we let him lie  
Just as he is? Let him lie there until  
The angels take him: he is turned by this  
Off from his face, beside, as you will see.

*Otti.* This dusty pane might serve for looking-glass.  
Three, four—four grey hairs! Is it so you said  
A plait of hair should wave across my neck?  
No—this way!

*Seb.* Ottima, I would give your neck,  
Each splendid shoulder, both those breasts of yours,  
That this were undone! Killing?—Kill the world  
So Luca lives again!—Ay, lives to sputter  
His fulsome dotage on you—yes, and feign  
Surprise that I returned at eve to sup,  
When all the morning I was loitering here—

## PIPPA PASSES

Bid me dispatch my business and begone.

I would—

*Otti.* See!

*Seb.* No, I'll finish! Do you think

I fear to speak the bare truth once for all?

All we have talked of is, at bottom, fine

To suffer—there's a recompense in guilt;

One must be venturous and fortunate—

What is one young for, else? In age we'll sigh

O'er the wild, reckless, wicked days flown over;

Still we have lived! The vice was in its place.

But to have eaten Luca's bread, have worn

His clothes, have felt his money swell my purse—

Do lovers in romances sin that way?

Why, I was starving when I used to call

And teach you music—starving while you plucked me

These flowers to smell!

*Otti.* My poor lost friend!

*Seb.* He gave me

Life—nothing less: what if he did reproach

My perfidy, and threaten, and do more—

Had he no right? What was to wonder at?

He sate by us at table quietly—

Why must you lean across till our cheeks touch'd?

Could he do less than make pretence to strike me?

'Tis not for the crime's sake—I'd commit ten crimes

Greater, to have this crime wiped out—undone!

And you—O, how feel you? feel you for me?

*Otti.* Well, then—I love you better now than ever—

And best (look at me while I speak to you)—

Best for the crime—nor do I grieve, in truth,

This mask, this simulated ignorance,

This affectation of simplicity,

Falls off our crime; this naked crime of ours

May not, now, be looked over—look it down, then!

Great? let it be great—but the joys it brought,

Pay they or no its price? Come—they or it!

Speak not! The past, would you give up the past

Such as it is, pleasure and crime together?

Give up that noon I owned my love for you—

## PIPPA PASSES

'The garden's silence—even the single bee  
Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopt  
And where he hid you only could surmise  
By some campanula's chalice set a-swing  
As he clung there—"Yes, I love you!"

*Seb.* . . . . . And I drew  
Back; put far back your face with both my hands  
Lest you should grow too full of me—your face  
So seemed athirst for my whole soul and body!

*Otti.* And when I ventured to receive you here,  
Made you steal hither in the mornings—

*Seb.* . . . . . When  
I used to look up 'neath the shrub-house here,  
Till the red fire on its glazed windows spread  
To a yellow haze?

*Otti.* . . . . . Ah—my sign was, the sun  
Inflamed the sere side of yon chestnut tree  
Nipt by the first frost.

*Seb.* . . . . . You would always laugh  
At my wet boots—I had to stride thro' grass  
Over my ancles.

*Otti.* Then our crowning night—

*Seb.* The July night?

*Otti.* The day of it too, Sebald!  
When the heaven's pillars seemed o'erbowed with  
heat,  
Its black-blue canopy seemed let descend  
Close on us both, to weigh down each to each,  
And smother up all life except our life.  
So lay we till the storm came.

*Seb.* How it came!

*Otti.* Buried in woods we lay, you recollect;  
Swift ran the searching tempest overhead;  
And ever and anon some bright white shaft  
Burnt thro' the pine-tree roof—here burnt and there,  
As if God's messenger thro' the close wood screen  
Plunged and replunged his weapon at a venture,  
Feeling for guilty thee and me: then broke  
The thunder like a whole sea overhead—

*Seb.* Yes! . . .



## PIPPA PASSES

*Otti.* —While I stretched myself upon you, hands  
To hands, my mouth to your hot mouth, and shook  
All my locks loose, and covered you with them—  
You, Sebald, the same you—

*Seb.* Slower, Ottima—

*Otti.* And as we lay—

*Seb.* Less vehemently! Love me—

Forgive me—take not words—mere words—to heart—  
Your breath is worse than wine! Breathe slow, speak  
slow—

Do not lean on me—

*Otti.* Sebald, as we lay,  
Rising and falling only with our pants,  
Who said, “Let death come now—’tis right to die!  
Right to be punished—nought completes such bliss  
But woe!” Who said that?

*Seb.* How did we ever rise?

Was’t that we slept? Why did it end?

*Otti.* I felt you,

Fresh tapering to a point the ruffled ends  
Of my loose locks ’twixt both your humid lips—  
(My hair is fallen now—knot it again!)

*Seb.* I kiss you now, dear Ottima, now, and now!  
This way? Will you forgive me—be once more  
My great Queen?

*Otti.* Bind it thrice about my brow;  
Crown me your queen, your spirit’s arbitress,  
Magnificent in sin. Say that!

*Seb.* I crown you  
My great white queen, my spirit’s arbitress,  
Magnificent—

*(From without is heard the voice of PIPPA,  
singing—*

*The year’s at the spring,  
And day’s at the morn;  
Morning’s at seven;  
The hill-side’s dew-pearled:  
The lark’s on the wing;  
The snail’s on the thorn;*

## PIPPA PASSES

*God's in his heaven—  
All's right with the world!*

(PIPPA passes.)

Seb. God's in his heaven! Do you hear that? Who spoke?

You, you spoke!

Otti. Oh—that little ragged girl!

She must have rested on the step—we give them

But this one holiday the whole year round.

Did you ever see our silk-mills—their inside?

There are ten silk-mills now belong to you.

She stoops to pick my double heartsease . . . Sh!

She does not hear—you call out louder!

Seb. Leave me!

Go, get your clothes on—dress those shoulders!

Otti. Sebald?

Seb. Wipe off that paint. I hate you!

Otti. Miserable!

Seb. My God! and she is emptied of it now!

Outright now!—how miraculously gone

All of the grace—had she not strange grace once?

Why, the blank cheek hangs listless as it likes,

No purpose holds the features up together,

Only the cloven brow and puckered chin

Stay in their places—and the very hair,

That seemed to have a sort of life in it,

Drops, a dead web!

Otti. Speak to me—speak not of me!

Seb. —That round great full-orbed face, where not  
an angle

Broke the delicious indolence—all broken!

Otti. To me—not of me!—ungrateful, perjured  
cheat—

A coward, too—but ingrate's worse than all!

Beggar—my slave—a fawning, cringing lie!

Leave me!—betray me!—I can see your drift—

A lie that walks, and eats, and drinks!

Seb. My God!

Those morbid, olive, faultless shoulder-blades—

## PIPPA PASSES

I should have known there was no blood beneath!

*Otti.* You hate me, then? You hate me, then?

*Seb.* To think

She would succeed in her absurd attempt,  
And fascinate by sinning; and show herself  
Superior—Guilt from its excess, superior  
To Innocence. That little peasant's voice  
Has righted all again. Though I be lost,  
I know which is the better, never fear,  
Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,  
Nature, or trick—I see what I have done,  
Entirely now! Oh, I am proud to feel  
Such torments—let the world take credit thence—  
I, have done my deed, pay too its price!  
I hate, hate—curse you! God's in his heaven!

*Otti.* —Me!

Me! no, no, Sebald—not yourself—kill me!  
Mine is the whole crime—do but kill me—then  
Yourself—then—presently—first hear me speak—  
I always meant to kill myself—wait, you!  
Lean on my breast—not as a breast: don't love me  
The more because you lean on me, my own  
Heart's Sebald! There—there—both deaths presently!

*Seb.* My brain is drowned now—quite drowned: all  
I feel

Is . . . is at swift-recurring intervals,  
A hurrying-down within me, as of waters  
Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit—  
There they go—whirls from a black, fiery sea!

*Otti.* Not to me, God—to him be merciful!

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from the  
Hillside to Orcana. Foreign Students of Painting  
and Sculpture, from Venice, assembled opposite the  
House of JULES, a young French Statuary.*

*1st Student.* Attention! my own post is beneath  
this window, but the pomegranate clump yonder will  
hide three or four of you with a little squeezing, and  
Schramm and his pipe must lie flat in the balcony.

## PIPPA PASSES

Four, five—who's a defaulter? We want everybody, for Jules must not be suffered to hurt his bride when the jest's found out.

*2nd Stud.* All here! Only our poet's away—never having much meant to be present, moonstrike him! The airs of that fellow, that Giovacchino! He was in violent love with himself, and had a fair prospect of thriving in his suit, so unmolested was it,—when suddenly a woman falls in love with him, too; and out of pure jealousy he takes himself off to Trieste, immortal poem and all—whereto is this prophetic epitaph appended already, as Bluphocks assures me—“*Here a mammoth-poem lies,—Fouled to death by butterflies.*” His own fault, the simpleton! Instead of cramp couplets, each like a knife in your entrails, he should write, says Bluphocks, both classically and intelligibly.—*Æsculapius, an Epic. Catalogue of the drugs: Hebe's plaister—One strip Cools your lip. Phœbus' emulsion—One bottle Clears your throttle. Mercury's bolus—One box Cures . . .*

*3d Stud.* Subside, my fine fellow! If the marriage was over by ten o'clock, Jules will certainly be here in a minute with his bride.

*2d Stud.* Good!—Only, so should the poet's muse have been universally acceptable, says Bluphocks, *et canibus nostris . . .* and Delia not better known to our literary dogs than the boy—Giovacchino!

*1st Stud.* To the point, now. Where's Gottlieb, the new-comer? Oh,—listen, Gottlieb, to what has called down this piece of friendly vengeance on Jules, of which we now assemble to witness the winding-up. We are all agreed, all in a tale, observe, when Jules shall burst out on us in a fury by and bye: I am spokesman—the verses that are to undeceive Jules bear my name of Lutwyche—but each professes himself alike insulted by this strutting stone-squarer, who came singly from Paris to Munich, and thence with a crowd of us to Venice and Possagno here, but proceeds in a day or two alone again—oh, alone, indubitably!—to Rome and Florence. He, forsooth, take up his

## PIPPA PASSES

portion with these dissolute, brutalised, heartless bunglers!—So he was heard to call us all: now is Schramm brutalised, I should like to know? Am I heartless?

*Gott.* Why, somewhat heartless; for, suppose Jules a coxcomb as much as you choose, still, for this mere coxcombry, you will have brushed off—what do folks style it?—the bloom of his life. Is it too late to alter? These love-letters, now, you call his . . I can't laugh at them.

*4th Stud.* Because you never read the sham letters of our inditing which drew forth these.

*Gott.* His discovery of the truth will be frightful.

*4th Stud.* That's the joke. But you should have joined us at the beginning: there's no doubt he loves the girl—loves a model he might hire by the hour!

*Gott.* See here! "He has been accustomed," he writes, "to have Canova's women about him, in stone, and the world's women beside him in flesh; these being as much below, as those, above—his soul's aspiration: but now he is to have the real." . . . There you laugh again! I say, you wipe off the very dew of his youth.

*1st Stud.* Schramm! (Take the pipe out of his mouth, somebody)—will Jules lose the bloom of his youth?

*Schramm.* Nothing worth keeping is ever lost in this world: look at a blossom—it drops presently, having done its service and lasted its time; but fruits succeed, and where would be the blossom's place could it continue? As well affirm that your eye is no longer in your body, because its earliest favourite, whatever it may have first loved to look on, is dead and done with—as that any affection is lost to the soul when its first object, whatever happened first to satisfy it, is superseded in due course. Keep but ever looking, whether with the body's eye or the mind's, and you will soon find something to look on! Has a man done wondering at women?—There follow men, dead and alive, to wonder at. Has he done wondering at men?

## PIPPA PASSES

—There's God to wonder at : and the faculty of wonder may be, at the same time, old and tired enough with respect to its first object, and yet young and fresh sufficiently, so far as concerns its novel one. Thus . . .

*1st Stud.* Put Schramm's pipe into his mouth again ! There, you see ! Well, this—Jules . . . a wretched fribble—oh, I watched his disportings at Possagna, the other day ! Canova's gallery—you know : there he marches first resolvedly past great works by the dozen without vouchsafing an eye : all at once he stops full at the *Psiche-fanciulla*—cannot pass that old acquaintance without a nod of encouragement—"In your new place, beauty ? Then behave yourself as well here as at Munich—I see you !" Next he posts himself deliberately before the unfinished *Pietà* for half an hour without moving, till up he starts of a sudden, and thrusts his very nose into—I say, into—the group ; by which gesture you are informed that precisely the sole point he had not fully mastered in Canova's practice was a certain method of using the drill in the articulation of the knee-joint—and that, likewise, has he mastered at length ! Good bye, therefore, to poor Canova—whose gallery no longer need detain his successor Jules, the predestinated novel thinker in marble !

*5th Stud.* Tell him about the women—go on to the women !

*1st Stud.* Why, on that matter he could never be supercilious enough. How should we be other (he said) than the poor devils you see, with those debasing habits we cherish ? He was not to wallow in that mire, at least : he would wait, and love only at the proper time, and meanwhile put up with the *Psiche-fanciulla*. Now I happened to hear of a young Greek—real Greek—girl at Malamocco ; a true Islander, do you see, with Alciphron's "hair like sea-moss"—Schramm knows !—white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen years old at farthest,—a daughter of Natalia, so she swears—that hag Natalia, who helps us to models at three *lire* an hour. We selected this

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girl for the heroine of our jest. So, first, Jules received a scented letter—somebody had seen his Tydeus at the academy, and my picture was nothing to it—a profound admirer bade him persevere—would make herself known to him ere long—(Paolina, my little friend of the *Fenice*, transcribes divinely). And in due time, the mysterious correspondent gave certain hints of her peculiar charms—the pale cheeks, the black hair—whatever, in short, had struck us in our Malamocco model: we retained her name, too—Phene, which is by interpretation. sea eagle. Now, think of Jules finding himself distinguished from the herd of us by such a creature! In his very first answer he proposed marrying his monitress: and fancy us over these letters, two, three times a day, to receive and dispatch! I concocted the main of it: relations were in the way—secrecy must be observed—in fine, would he wed her on trust, and only speak to her when they were indissolubly united? St—st—Here they come!

*6th Stud.* Both of them! Heaven's love, speak softly! speak within yourselves!

*5th Stud.* Look at the bridegroom! Half his hair in storm, and half in calm,—patted down over the left temple,—like a frothy cup one blows on to cool it! and the same old blouse that he murders the marble in!

*2d Stud.* Not a rich vest like yours, Hannibal Scratchy!—rich, that your face may the better set it off!

*6th Stud.* And the bride! Yes, sure enough, our Phene! Should you have known her in her clothes? How magnificently pale!

*Gott.* She does not also take it for earnest, I hope?

*1st Stud.* Oh, Natalia's concern, that is! We settle with Natalia.

*6th Stud.* She does not speak—has evidently let out no word. The only thing is, will she equally remember the rest of her lesson, and repeat correctly all those verses which are to break the secret to Jules?

## PIPPA PASSES

*Gott.* How he gazes on her! Pity—pity

*1st Stud.* They go in—now, silence! You three,—not nearer the window, mind, than that pomegranate—just where the little girl, who a few minutes ago passed us singing, is seated!

*II.—Noon. Over Orcana. The House of JULES, who crosses its threshold with PHENE—she is silent, on which JULES begins—*

Do not die, Phene—I am yours now—you  
Are mine now—let fate reach me how she likes,  
If you'll not die—so, never die! Sit here—  
My work-room's single seat: I over-lean  
This length of hair and lustrous front—they turn  
Like an entire flower upward—eyes—lips—last  
Your chin—no, last your throat turns—'tis their scent  
Pulls down my face upon you! Nay, look ever  
This one way till I change, grow you—I could  
Change into you, beloved!

You by me,

And I by you—this is your hand in mine—  
And side by side we sit: all's true. Thank God!  
I have spoken—speak, you!

—O, my life to come!

My Tydeus must be carved, that's there in clay;  
Yet how be carved, with you about the chamber?  
Where must I place you? When I think that once  
This room-full of rough block-work seemed my  
heaven

Without you! Shall I ever work again—  
Get fairly into my old ways again—  
Bid each conception stand while, trait by trait,  
My hand transfers its lineaments to stone?  
Will my mere fancies live near you, my truth—  
The live truth—passing and repassing me—  
Sitting beside me?

Now speak!

Only, first,

See, all your letters! Was't not well contrived?



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Their hiding-place is Psyche's robe; she keeps  
Your letters next her skin: which drops out fore-  
most?

Ah,—this that swam down like a first moonbeam  
Into my world!

Again those eyes complete  
Their melancholy survey, sweet and slow,  
Of all my room holds; to return and rest  
On me, with pity, yet some wonder too—  
As if God bade some spirit plague a world,  
And this were the one moment of surprise  
And sorrow while she took her station, pausing  
O'er what she sees, finds good, and must destroy!  
What gaze you at? Those? Books, I told you of;  
Let your first word to me rejoice them, too:  
This minion, a Coluthus, writ in red  
Bistre and azure by Bessarion's scribe—  
Read this line . . . no, shame—Homer's be the Greek  
First breathed me from the lips of my Greek girl!  
My Odyssey in coarse black vivid type  
With faded yellow blossoms 'twixt page and page,  
To mark great places with due gratitude;  
*"He said, and on Antinous directed  
"A bitter shaft" . . . a flower blots out the rest!*  
Again upon your search? My statues, then!  
—Ah, do not mind that—better that will look  
When cast in bronze—an Almain Kaiser, that,  
Swart-green and gold, with truncheon based on hip.  
This, rather, turn to! What, unrecognised?  
I thought you would have seen that here you sit  
As I imagined you,—Hippolyta,  
Naked upon her bright Numidian horse!  
Recall you this, then? "Carve in bold relief"—  
So you commanded—"carve, against I come,  
"A Greek, in Athens, as our fashion was,  
"Feasting, bay-filletted and thunder-free,  
"Who rises 'neath the lifted myrtle-branch:  
"*"Praise those who slew Hipparchus,"* cry the guests,  
"*While o'er thy head the singer's myrtle waves*  
"*"As erst above our champions': stand up, all!"*"

## PIPPA PASSES

See, I have laboured to express your thought !  
Quite round, a cluster of mere hands and arms,  
(Thrust in all senses, all ways, from all sides,  
Only consenting at the branches' end  
They strain toward) serves for frame to a sole face—  
The Praiser's—in the centre—who with eyes  
Sightless, so bend they back to light inside  
His brain where visionary forms throng up,  
Sings, minding not that palpitating arch  
Of hands and arms, nor the quick drip of wine  
From the drenched leaves o'erhead, nor crowns cast  
off,

Violet and parsley crowns to trample on—  
Sings, pausing as the patron-ghosts approve,  
Devoutly their unconquerable hymn !  
But you must say a "well" to that—say, "well !"  
Because you gaze—am I fantastic, sweet ?  
Gaze like my very life's stuff, marble—marbly  
Even to the silence ! why before I found  
The real flesh Phene, I inured myself  
To see, throughout all nature, varied stuff  
For better nature's birth by means of art :  
With me, each substance tended to one form  
Of beauty—to the human Archetype—  
On every side occurred suggestive germs  
Of that—the tree, the flower—or take the fruit—  
Some rosy shape, continuing the peach,  
Curved beewise o'er its bough ; as rosy limbs,  
Depending, nestled in the leaves—and just  
From a cleft rose-peach the whole **Dryad** sprang !  
But of the stuffs one can be master of,  
How I divined their capabilities !  
From the soft-rinded smoothening facile chalk  
That yields your outline to the air's embrace,  
Half-softened by a halo's pearly gloom ;  
Down to the crisp imperious steel, so sure  
To cut its one confided thought clean out  
Of all the world : but marble !—'neath my tools  
More pliable than jelly—as it were  
Some clear primordial creature dug from depths

## PIPPA PASSES

In the Earth's heart, where itself breeds itself,  
And whence all baser substance may be worked;  
Refine it off to air, you may—condense it  
Down to the diamond;—is not metal there,  
When o'er the sudden specks my chisel trips?  
—Not flesh—as flake off flake I scale, approach,  
Lay bare those blueish veins of blood asleep?  
Lurks flame in no strange windings where, surprised  
By the swift implement sent home at once,  
Flushes and glowings radiate and hover  
About its track?—

Phene? what—why is this?  
That whitening cheek, those still-dilating eyes!  
Ah, you will die—I knew that you would die!

*PHENE begins, on his having long remained silent.*

Now the end's coming—to be sure, it must  
Have ended sometime! Tush—why need I speak  
Their foolish speech? I cannot bring to mind  
One half of it, besides; and do not care  
For old Natalia now, nor any of them.  
Oh, you—what are you?—if I do not try  
To say the words Natalia made me learn,  
To please your friends,—it is to keep myself  
Where your voice lifted me, by letting it  
Proceed—but can it? Even you, perhaps,  
Cannot take up, now you have once let fall,  
The music's life, and me along with that—  
No, or you would! We'll stay, then, as we are  
—Above the world.

You creature with the eyes!  
If I could look for ever up to them,  
As now you let me,—I believe, all sin,  
All memory of wrong done or suffering borne,  
Would drop down, low and lower, to the earth  
Whence all that's low comes, and there touch and  
stay  
—Never to overtake the rest of me,  
All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,

## PIPPA PASSES

Drawn by those eyes ! What rises is myself,  
Not so the shame and suffering ; but they sink,  
Are left, I rise above them—Keep me so  
Above the world !

But you sink, for your eyes  
Are altering—altered ! Stay—"I love you, love  
you" . . .

I could prevent it if I understood  
More of your words to me—was't in the tone  
Or the words, your power ?

Or stay—I will repeat  
Their speech, if that contents you ! Only, change  
No more, and I shall find it presently  
—Far back here, in the brain yourself filled up.  
Natalia threatened me that harm would follow  
Unless I spoke their lesson to the end,  
But harm to me, I thought she meant, not you.  
Your friends,—Natalia said they were your friends  
And meant you well,—because I doubted it,  
Observing (what was very strange to see)  
On every face, so different in all else,  
The same smile girls like us are used to bear,  
But never men, men cannot stoop so low ;  
Yet your friends, speaking of you, used that smile,  
That hateful smirk of boundless self-conceit  
Which seems to take possession of this world  
And make of God their tame confederate,  
Purveyor to their appetites . . . you know !  
But no—Natalia said they were your friends,  
And they assented while they smiled the more,  
And all came round me,—that thin Englishman  
With light, lank hair seemed leader of the rest ;  
He held a paper—"What we want," said he,  
Ending some explanation to his friends—  
"Is something slow, involved and mystical,  
"To hold Jules long in doubt, yet take his taste  
"And lure him on, so that, at innermost  
"Where he seeks sweetness' soul, he may find—this !  
"—As in the apple's core, the noisome fly :  
"For insects on the rind are seen at once,

## PIPPA PASSES

"And brushed aside as soon, but this is found  
"Only when on the lips or loathing tongue."  
And so he read what I have got by heart—  
I'll speak it,—“Do not die, love! I am yours” . . .  
Stop—is not that, or like that, part of words  
Yourself began by speaking? Strange to lose  
What costs much pains to learn! Is this more right?

*I am a painter who cannot paint;  
In my life, a devil rather than saint,  
In my brain, as poor a creature too—  
No end to all I cannot do!  
Yet do one thing at least I can—  
Love a man, or hate a man  
Supremely: thus my love began.  
Through the Valley of Love I went,  
In its loveliest spot to abide,  
And just on the verge where I pitched my tent,  
I found Hate dwelling beside.  
(Let the Bridegroom ask what the painter meant,  
Of his Bride, of the peerless Bride!)  
And further, I traversed Hate's grove,  
In its hatefullest nook to dwell;  
But lo, where I flung myself prone, couched Love  
Where the deepest shadow fell.  
(The meaning—those black bride's-eyes above,  
Not the painter's lip should tell!)*

"And here," said he, "Jules probably will ask,  
"You have black eyes, love,—you are, sure enough,  
"My peerless bride,—so do you tell, indeed,  
"What needs some explanation—what means this?"  
—And I am to go on, without a word—

*So I grew wiser in Love and Hate,  
From simple, that I was of late.  
For once, when I loved, I would enlace  
Breast, eyelids, hands, feet, form and face  
Of her I loved, in one embrace—  
As if by mere love I could love immensely!  
And when I hated, I would plunge  
My sword, and wipe with the first lunge*

## PIPPA PASSES

*My foe's whole life out, like a sponge—  
As if by mere hate I could hate intensely!  
But now I am wiser, know better the fashion  
How passion seeks aid from its opposite passion,  
And if I see cause to love more, or hate more  
That ever man loved, ever hated, before .  
And seek in the Valley of Love,  
The spot, or the spot in Hate's Grove,  
Where my soul may the sureliest reach  
The essence, nought less, of each,  
The Hate of all Hates, or the Love  
Of all Loves, in its Valley or Grove,—  
I find them the very warders  
Each of the other's borders.  
I love most, when Love is disguised  
In Hate ; and when Hate is surprised  
In Love, then I hate most : ask  
How Love smiles through Hate's iron casque,  
Hate grins through Love's rose-braided mask,—  
And how, having hated thee,  
I sought long and painfully  
To wound thee, and not prick  
The skin, but pierce to the quick—  
Ask this, my Jules, and be answered straight  
By thy bride—how the painter Lutwyche can hate !*

JULES *interposes.*

Lutwyche—who else ? But all of them, no doubt,  
Hated me : they at Venice—presently  
Their turn, however ! You I shall not meet :  
If I dreamed, saying this would wake me !

Keep

What's here, this gold—we cannot meet again.  
Consider—and the money was but meant  
For two years' travel, which is over now,  
All chance, or hope, or care, or need of it !  
This—and what comes from selling these, my casts  
And books, and medals, except . . . let them go  
Together, so the produce keeps you safe

## PIPPA PASSES

Out of Natalia's clutches!—If by chance  
(For all's chance here) I should survive the gang  
At Venice, root out all fifteen of them,  
We might meet somewhere, since the world is wide—

*(From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—*

*Give her but a least excuse to love me!*

*When—where—*

*How—can this arm establish her above me,*

*If fortune fixed her as my lady there,*

*There already, to eternally reprove me?*

*(“Hist”—said Kate the queen;*

*But “Oh—” cried the maiden, binding her tresses,*

*“’Tis only a page that carols unseen*

*“Crumbling your hounds their messes!”)*

*Is she wronged?—To the rescue of her honour,  
My heart!*

*Is she poor?—What cost it to be styled a donour?*

*Merely an earth's to cleave, a sea's to part!*

*But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her!*

*(“Nay, list,”—bade Kate the queen;*

*And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,*

*“’Tis only a page that carols unseen*

*“Fitting your hawks their jesses!”)* (PIPPA passes.)

JULES resumes.

What name was that the little girl sang forth?

Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who renounced

The crown of Cyprus to be lady here

At Asolo, where still the peasants keep

Her memory; and songs tell how many a page

Pined for the grace of one so far above

His power of doing good to, as a queen—

“She never could be wronged, be poor,” he sighed,

“For him to help her!”

Yes, a bitter thing

To see our lady above all need of us;

## PIPPA PASSES

Yet so we look ere we will love; not I,  
But the world looks so. If whoever loves  
Must be, in some sort, god or worshipper,  
The blessing or the blest one, queen or page,  
Why should we always choose the page's part?  
Here is a woman with utter need of me,—  
I find myself queen here, it seems!

How strange!

Look at the woman here with the new soul,  
Like my own Psyche's,—fresh upon her lips  
Alit, the visionary butterfly,  
Waiting my word to enter and make bright,  
Or flutter off and leave all blank as first.  
This body had no soul before, but slept  
Or stirred, was beauteous or ungainly, free  
From taint or foul with stain, as outward things  
Fastened their image on its passiveness:  
Now, it will wake, feel, live—or die again!  
Shall to produce form out of unshaped stuff  
Be art—and, further, to evoke a soul  
From form, be nothing? This new soul is mine!

Now, to kill Lutwyche, what would that do?—save  
A wretched dauber, men will hoot to death  
Without me, from their laughter!—Oh, to hear  
God's voice plain as I heard it first, before  
They broke in with that laughter! I heard them  
Henceforth, not God!

To Ancona—Greece—some isle!

I wanted silence only—there is clay  
Every where. One may do whate'er one likes  
In Art—the only thing is, to make sure  
That one does like it—which takes pains to know.

Scatter all this, my Phene—this mad dream!  
Who—what is Lutwyche—what Natalia's friends,  
What the whole world except our love—my own,  
Own Phene? But I told you, did I not,  
Ere night we travel for your land—some isle  
With the sea's silence on it? Stand aside—  
I do but break these paltry models up



## PIPPA PASSES

To begin art afresh. Shall I meet Lutwyche,  
And save him from my statue's meeting him?  
Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!  
Like a god going thro' his world there stands  
One mountain for a moment in the dusk,  
Whole brotherhoods of cedars on its brow—  
And you are ever by me while I gaze  
—Are in my arms as now—as now—as now!  
Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!  
Some unsuspected isle in far off seas!

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from Orcana to the Turret. Two or three of the Austrian Police loitering with BLUPHOCKS, an English vagabond, just in view of the Turret.*

*Bluphocks.\** So, that is your Pippa, the little girl who passed us singing? Well, your Bishop's Intendant's money shall be honestly earned:—now, don't make me that sour face because I bring the Bishop's name into the business—we know he can have nothing to do with such horrors—we know that he is a saint and all that a Bishop should be, who is a great man besides. *Oh! were but every worm a maggot, Every fly a grig, Every bough a christmas faggot, Every tune a jig!* In fact, I have abjured all religions; but the last I inclined to, was the Armenian—for I have travelled, do you see, and at Koenigsberg, Prussia Improper (so styled because there's a sort of bleak hungry sun there,) you might remark over a venerable house-porch, a certain Chaldee inscription; and brief as it is, a mere glance at it used absolutely to change the mood of every bearded passenger. In they turned, one and all; the young and lightsome, with no irreverent pause, the aged and decrepit, with a sensible alacrity,—'twas the Grand Rabbi's abode, in short. Struck with curiosity, I lost no time in learning Syriac—(these are vowels, you dogs,—follow my stick's

\* “He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

## PIPPA PASSES

end in the mud—*Celarent, Darii, Ferio!*) and one morning presented myself spelling-book in hand, a, b, c,—I picked it out letter by letter, and what was the purport of this miraculous posy? Some cherished legend of the past you'll say—“*How Moses hocus-pocust Egypt's land with fly and locust,*”—or, “*How to Jonah sounded harshish, Get thee up and go to Tarshish,*”—or, “*How the angel meeting Balaam, Straight his ass returned a salaam;*”—in no wise!—“*Shackabrach—Boach—somebody or other—Isaac, Receiver, Pur-cha-ser and Ex-chan-ger of—Stolen goods!*” So talk to me of the religion of a bishop! I have renounced all bishops save Bishop Beveridge—mean to live so—and die—*As some Greek dog-sage, dead and merry, Hellward bound in Charon's wherry—With food for both worlds, under and upper, Lupine-seed and Hecate's supper, and never an obolos . . .* (Though thanks to you, or this Intendant thro' you, or this Bishop through his Intendant—I possess a burning pocket-full of *zwanzigers*) . . . *To pay the Stygian ferry!*

1st Pol. There is the girl, then; go and deserve them the moment you have pointed out to us Signor Luigi and his mother. (*To the rest*) I have been noticing a house yonder, this long while—not a shutter unclosed since morning!

2d Pol. Old Luca Gaddi's, that owns the silk-mills here: he dozes by the hour—wakes up, sighs deeply, says he should like to be Prince Metternich, and then dozes again, after having bidden young Sebald, the foreigner, set his wife to playing draughts: never molest such a household, they mean well.

Blup. Only, cannot you tell me something of this little Pippa, I must have to do with?—one could make something of that name. Pippa—that is, short for Felippa—rhyming to—*Panerge consults Hertrippa—Believ'st thou, King Agrippa?* Something might be done with that name.

2d Pol. Put into rhyme that your head and a ripe musk-melon would not be dear at half a *zwanziger!*

## PIPPA PASSES

Leave this fooling, and look out—the afternoon's over or nearly so.

*3d Pol.* Where in this passport of Signor Luigi does our principal instruct you to watch him so narrowly? There? what's there beside a simple signature? (That English fool's busy watching.)

*2d Pol.* Flourish all round—"put all possible obstacles in his way;" oblong dot at the end—"Detain him till further advices reach you;" scratch at bottom—"send him back on pretence of some informality in the above;" ink-spurt on right-hand side, (which is the case here)—"Arrest him at once," why and wherefore, I don't concern myself, but my instructions amount to this: if Signor Luigi leaves home to-night for Vienna, well and good—the passport deposed with us for our *visa* is really for his own use, they have misinformed the Office, and he means well; but let him stay over to-night—there has been the pretence we suspect—the accounts of his corresponding and holding intelligence with the Carbonari are correct—we arrest him at once—to-morrow comes Venice—and presently, Spielberg. Bluphocks makes the signal sure enough! That is he, entering the turret with his mother, no doubt.

III.—*Evening. Inside the Turret. LUIGI and his Mother entering.*

*Mother.* If there blew wind, you'd hear a long sigh,  
easing

The utmost heaviness of music's heart.

*Luigi.* Here in the archway?

*Mother.* Oh, no, no—in farther,  
Where the echo is made—on the ridge.

*Luigi.* Here surely, then.  
How plain the tap of my heel as I leaped up!  
Hark—"Lucius Junius!" The very ghost of a voice,  
Whose body is caught and kept by . . . what are those?  
Mere withered wall-flowers, waving overhead?  
They seem an elvish group with thin bleached hair  
Who lean out of their topmost fortress—looking

## PIPPA PASSES

And listening, mountain men, to what we say,  
Hands under chin of each grave earthy face:  
Up and show faces all of you!—“*All of you!*”  
That's the king's dwarf with the scarlet comb; now  
hark—

Come down and meet your fate! Hark—“*Meet your  
fate!*”

*Mother.* Let him not meet it, my Luigi—do not  
Go to his City! putting crime aside,  
Half of these ills of Italy are feigned—  
Your Pellicos and writers for effect,  
Write for effect.

*Luigi.* Hush! say A. writes, and B.

*Mother.* These A's and B's write for effect, I say.  
Then, evil is in its nature loud, while good  
Is silent—you hear each petty injury—  
None of his daily virtues; he is old,  
Quiet, and kind, and densely stupid—why  
Do A. and B. not kill him themselves?

*Luigi.* They teach  
Others to kill him—me—and, if I fail,  
Others to succeed; now, if A. tried and failed  
I could not teach that: mine's the lesser task.  
*Mother,* they visit night by night . . .

*Mother.* —You, Luigi?  
Ah, will you let me tell you what you are?

*Luigi.* Why not? Oh, the one thing you fear to hint,  
You may assure yourself I say and say  
Ever to myself; at times—nay, even as now  
We sit, I think my mind is touched—suspect  
All is not sound: but is not knowing that,  
What constitutes one sane or otherwise?  
I know I am thus—so all is right again!  
I laugh at myself as through the town I walk,  
And see men merry as if no Italy  
Were suffering; then I ponder—“I am rich,  
“Young, healthy; why should this fact trouble me,  
“More than it troubles these?” But it does trouble me!  
No—trouble's a bad word—for as I walk  
There's springing and melody and giddiness,

## PIPPA PASSES

And old quaint terms and passages of my youth—  
Dreams long forgotten, little in themselves—  
Return to me—whatever may amuse me,  
And earth seems in a truce with me, and heaven  
Accords with me, all things suspend their strife,  
The very cicalas laugh “There goes he, and there!  
“Feast him, the time is short—he is on his way  
“For the world’s sake—feast him this once, our friend!”  
And in return for all this, I can trip  
Cheerfully up the scaffold-steps: I go  
This evening, mother!

*Mother.* But mistrust yourself—  
Mistrust the judgment you pronounce on him.

*Luigi.* Oh, there I feel—am sure that I am right!

*Mother.* Mistrust your judgment, then, of the mere  
means

Of this wild enterprise: say you are right,—  
How should one in your state e’er bring to pass  
What would require a cool head, a cold heart,  
And a calm hand? You never will escape.

*Luigi.* Escape—to even wish that, would spoil all!  
The dying is best part of it. Too much  
Have I enjoyed these fifteen years of mine,  
To leave myself excuse for longer life—  
Was not life pressed down, running o’er with joy,  
That I might finish with it ere my fellows  
Who, sparerlier feasted, make a longer stay?  
I was put at the board-head, helped to all  
At first; I rise up happy and content.  
God must be glad one loves his world so much—  
I can give news of earth to all the dead  
Who ask me:—last year’s sunsets, and great stars  
That had a right to come first and see ebb  
The crimson wave that drifts the sun away—  
Those crescent moons with notched and burning rims  
That strengthened into sharp fire, and there stood,  
Impatient of the azure—and that day  
In March, a double rainbow stopped the storm—  
May’s warm, slow, yellow moonlit summer nights—  
Gone are they, but I have them in my soul!

## PIPPA PASSES

*Mother.* (He will not go !)

*Luigi.* You smile at me ! 'Tis true.—  
Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghastliness,  
Environ my devotedness as quietly  
As round about some antique altar wreath  
The rose festoons, goats' horns, and oxen's skulls.

*Mother.* See now : you reach the city—you must cross  
His threshold—how ?

*Luigi.* Oh, that's if we conspired !  
Then would come pains in plenty, as you guess—  
But guess not how the qualities required  
For such an office—qualities I have—  
Would little stead me otherwise employed,  
Yet prove of rarest merit here—here only.  
Every one knows for what his excellence  
Will serve, but no one ever will consider  
For what his worst defect might serve ; and yet  
Have you not seen me range our coppice yonder  
In search of a distorted ash?—it happens  
The wry spoilt branch's a natural perfect bow !  
Fancy the thrice-sage, thrice-precautioned man  
Arriving at the palace on my errand !  
No, no—I have a handsome dress packed up—  
White satin here, to set off my black hair—  
In I shall march—for you may watch your life out  
Behind thick walls—make friends there to betray you ;  
More than one man spoils everything. March straight—  
Only, no clumsy knife to fumble for—  
Take the great gate, and walk (not saunter) on  
Thro' guards and guards—I have rehearsed it all  
Inside the Turret here a hundred times—  
Don't ask the way of whom you meet, observe,  
But where they cluster thickliest is the door  
Of doors ; they'll let you pass—they'll never blab  
Each to the other, he knows not the favourite,  
Whence he is bound and what's his business now—  
Walk in—straight up to him—you have no knife—  
Be prompt, how should he scream ? Then, out with you !  
Italy, Italy, my Italy !  
You're free, you're free ! Oh mother, I could dream

## PIPPA PASSES

They got about me—Andrea from his exile,  
Pier from his dungeon, Gaultier from his grave!

*Mother.* Well, you shall go. Yet seems this patriotism  
The easiest virtue for a selfish man  
To acquire! He loves himself—and next, the world—  
If he must love beyond,—but nought between:  
As a short-sighted man sees nought midway  
His body and the sun above. But you  
Are my adored Luigi—ever obedient  
To my least wish, and running o'er with love—  
I could not call you cruel or unkind!  
Once more, your ground for killing him!—then go!

*Luigi.* Now do you ask me, or make sport of me?  
How first the Austrians got these provinces—  
(If that is all, I'll satisfy you soon)  
. . . Never by conquest but by cunning, for  
That treaty whereby . . .

*Mother.* Well?

*Luigi.* (Sure he's arrived,  
The tell-tale cuckoo—spring's his confidant,  
And he lets out her April purposes!)  
Or . . better go at once to modern times—  
He has . . they have . . in fact, I understand  
But can't re-state the matter; that's my boast;  
Others could reason it out to you, and prove  
Things they have made me feel.

*Mother.* Why go to-night?  
Morn's for adventure. Jupiter is now  
A morning star. I cannot hear you, Luigi!

*Luigi.* "I am the bright and morning-star," God  
saith—  
And, "to such an one I give the morning-star!"  
The gift of the morning-star—have I God's gift  
Of the morning-star?

*Mother.* Chiara will love to see  
That Jupiter an evening-star next June.

*Luigi.* True, mother. Well for those who live  
through June!

Great noontides, thunder storms, all glaring pomps  
Which triumph at the heels of sovereign June

## PIPPA PASSES

Leading his glorious revel thro' our world.  
Yes, Chiara will be here—

*Mother.*

In June—remember,  
Yourself appointed that month for her coming—

*Luigi.* Was that low noise the echo?

*Mother.*

The night-wind.

She must be grown—with her blue eyes upturned  
As if life were one long and sweet surprise:  
In June she comes.

*Luigi.*

We were to see together  
The Titian at Treviso—there, again!

*(From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—)*

*A king lived long ago,  
In the morning of the world,  
When earth was nigher heaven than now:  
And the king's locks curled  
Disparting o'er a forehead full  
As the milk-white space 'twixt horn and horn  
Of some sacrificial bull—  
Only calm as a babe new-born:  
For he was got to a sleepy mood,  
So safe from all decrepitude,  
From age with its bane, so sure gone by,  
(The Gods so loved him while he dreamed,)  
That, having lived thus long, there seemed  
No need the king should ever die.*

*Luigi.* No need that sort of king should ever die!

*[From without.] Among the rocks his city was:  
Before his palace, in the sun,  
He sate to see his people pass,  
And judge them every one  
From its threshold of smooth stone.  
They haled him many a valley-thief  
Caught in the sheep-pens—robber-chief,  
Swarthy and shameless—beggar-cheat—  
Spy-prowler—or rough pirate found*



## PIPPA PASSES

*On the sea-sand left aground;  
And sometimes clung about his feet,  
With bleeding lip and burning cheek,  
A woman, bitterest wrong to speak  
Of one with sullen thickset brows:  
And sometimes from the prison-house  
The angry priests a pale wretch brought,  
Who through some chink had pushed and pressed,  
On knees and elbows, belly and breast,  
Worm-like into the temple,—caught  
At last there by the very God  
Who ever in the darkness strode  
Backward and forward, keeping watch  
O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to catch!  
And these, all and every one,  
The king judged, sitting in the sun.*

*Luigi.* That king should still judge sitting in the sun!

*[From without.] His councillors, on left and right,  
Looked anxious up,—but no surprise  
Disturbed the king's old smiling eyes,  
Where the very blue had turned to white.  
'Tis said a Python scared one day  
The breathless city, till he came,  
With forked tongue and eyes on flame,  
Where the old king sate to judge alway;  
But when he saw the sweepy hair,  
Girt with a crown of berries rare  
Which the God will hardly give to wear  
To the maiden who singeth, dancing bare  
In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch lights,  
At his wondrous forest rites,—  
Beholding this, he did not dare,  
Approach that threshold in the sun,  
Assault the old king smiling there.  
Such grace had kings when the world begun!*

*(PIPPA passes.)*

*Luigi.* And such grace have they, now that the  
world ends!

## PIPPA PASSES

The Python in the city, on the throne,  
And brave men, God would crown for slaying him,  
Lurk in bye-corners lest they fall his prey.  
Are crowns yet to be won, in this late trial,  
Which weakness makes me hesitate to reach?  
'Tis God's voice calls, how could I stay? Farewell!

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from the  
Turret to the Bishop's brother's House, close to the  
Duomo S. Maria. Poor Girls sitting on the steps.*

1st Girl. There goes a swallow to Venice—the stout  
sea-farer!

Seeing those birds fly, makes one wish for wings.  
Let us all wish; you, wish first!

2d Girl. I? This sunset  
To finish.

3d Girl. That old . . . somebody I know,  
Greyer and older than my grandfather,  
To give me the same treat he gave last week—  
Feeding me on his knee with fig-peckers,  
Lampreys, and red Breganze-wine, and mumbling  
The while some folly about how well I fare,  
To be let eat my supper quietly—  
Since had he not himself been late this morning  
Detained at—never mind where,—had he not . . .  
“Eh, baggage, had I not!”—

2d Girl. How she can lie!

3d Girl. Look there—by the nails—

2d Girl. What makes your fingers red?

3d Girl. Dipping them into wine to write bad words  
with,

On the bright table—how he laughed!

1st Girl. My turn:  
Spring's come and summer's coming: I would wear  
A long loose gown—down to the feet and hands—  
With plaits here, close about the throat, all day:  
And all night lie, the cool long nights, in bed—  
And have new milk to drink—apples to eat,  
Deuzans and junetings, leather-coats . . . ah, I should  
say,

## PIPPA PASSES

This is away in the fields—miles!

*3d Girl.* Say at once  
You'd be at home—she'd always be at home!  
Now comes the story of the farm among  
The cherry orchards, and how April snowed  
White blossoms on her as she ran: why, fool,  
They've rubbed out the chalk-mark of how tall you were,  
Twisted your starling's neck, broken his cage,  
Made a dunghill of your garden—

*1st Girl.* They, destroy  
My garden since I left them? well—perhaps!  
I would have done so—so I hope they have!  
A fig-tree curled out of our cottage wall—  
They called it mine, I have forgotten why,  
It must have been there long ere I was born;  
Cric—cric—I think I hear the wasps o'erhead  
Pricking the papers strung to flutter there  
And keep off birds in fruit-time—coarse long papers,  
And the wasps eat them, prick them through and  
through.

*3d Girl.* How her mouth twitches! Where was  
I?—before  
She broke in with her wishes and long gowns  
And wasps—would I be such a fool!—Oh, here!  
This is my way—I answer every one  
Who asks me why I make so much of him—  
(If you say, you love him—straight “he'll not be  
gulled”

“He that seduced me when I was a girl  
Thus high—had eyes like yours, or hair like yours,  
Brown, red, white,”—as the case may be—that pleases!  
(See how that beetle burnishes in the path—  
There sparkles he along the dust! and, there—  
Your journey to that maize-tuft's spoilt at least!)

*1st Girl.* When I was young, they said if you killed  
one  
Of those sunshiny beetles, that his friend  
Up there, would shine no more that day nor next.

*2d Girl.* When you were young? Nor are you  
young, that's true!

## PIPPA PASSES

How your plump arms, that were, have dropped away !  
Why, I can span them ! Cecco beats you still ?  
No matter, so you keep your curious hair.  
I wish they'd find a way to dye our hair  
Your colour—any lighter tint, indeed,  
Than black—the men say they are sick of black,  
Black eyes, black hair !

*4th Girl.* Sick of yours, like enough !  
Do you pretend you ever tasted lampreys  
And ortolans ? Giovita, of the palace,  
Engaged (but there's no trusting him) to slice me  
Polenta with a knife that has cut up  
An ortolan.

*2d Girl.* Why, there ! is not that, Pippa  
We are to talk to, under the window,—quick,—  
Where the lights are ?

*1st Girl.* No—or she would sing ;  
—For the Intendant said . . .

*3d Girl.* Oh, you sing first—  
Then, if she listens and comes close . . . I'll tell you,  
Sing that song the young English noble made,  
Who took you for the purest of the pure,  
And meant to leave the world for you—what fun !

*2d Girl.* [*Sings.*]

You'll love me yet!—and I can tarry  
Your love's protracted growing :  
June reared that bunch of flowers you carry  
From seeds of April's sowing.

I plant a heartfull now—some seed  
At least is sure to strike  
And yield—what you'll not pluck indeed,  
Not love, but, may be, like !

You'll look at least on love's remains,  
A grave's one violet :  
Your look ?—that pays a thousand pains.  
What's death ?—You'll love me yet !

*3d Girl.* [*To PIPPA who approaches.*] Oh, you may  
come closer—we shall not eat you ! Why, you seem  
the very person that the great rich handsome English-

## PIPPA PASSES

man has fallen so violently in love with! I'll tell you all about it.

IV.—*Night. The Palace by the Duomo.* MONSIGNOR,  
*dismissing his Attendants.*

*Mon.* Thanks, friends, many thanks. I chiefly desire life now, that I may recompense every one of you. Most I know something of already. What, a repast prepared? *Benedicto benedicatur* . . . ugh . . . ugh! Where was I? Oh, as you were remarking, Ugo, the weather is mild, very unlike winter-weather,—but I am a Sicilian, you know, and shiver in your Julys here: To be sure, when 'twas full summer at Messina, as we priests used to cross in procession the great square on Assumption Day, you might see our thickest yellow tapers twist suddenly in two, each like a falling star, or sink down on themselves in a gore of wax. But go, my friends, but go! [*To the Intendant*] Not you, Ugo! [*The others leave the apartment*] I have long wanted to converse with you, Ugo!

*Inten.* Uguccio—

*Mon.* . . 'guccio Stefani, man! of Ascoli, Fermo, and Fossombruno;—what I do need instructing about, are these accounts of your administration of my poor brother's affairs. Ugh! I shall never get through a third part of your accounts: take some of these dainties before we attempt it, however: are you bashful to that degree? For me, a crust and water suffice.

*Inten.* Do you choose this especial night to question me?

*Mon.* This night, Ugo. You have managed my late brother's affairs since the death of our elder brother—fourteen years and a month, all but three days. On the 3rd of December, I find him . . .

*Inten.* If you have so intimate an acquaintance with your brother's affairs, you will be tender of turning so far back—they will hardly bear looking into, so far back.

## PIPPA PASSES

*Mon.* Ay, ay, ugh, ugh,—nothing but disappointments here below! I remark a considerable payment made to yourself on this 3rd of December. Talk of disappointments! There was a young fellow here, Jules, a foreign sculptor, I did my utmost to advance, that the church might be a gainer by us both: he was going on hopefully enough, and of a sudden he notifies to me some marvellous change that has happened in his notions of art; here's his letter,—“He never had a clearly conceived Ideal within his brain till to day. Yet since his hand could manage a chisel, he has practised expressing other men's Ideals—and, in the very perfection he has attained to, he foresees an ultimate failure—his unconscious hand will pursue its prescribed course of old years, and will reproduce with a fatal expertness the ancient types, let the novel one appear never so palpably to his spirit: there is but one method of escape—confiding the virgin type to as chaste a hand, he will turn painter instead of sculptor, and paint, not carve, its characteristics,”—strike out, I dare say, a school like Correggio: how think you Ugo?

*Inten.* Is Correggio a painter?

*Mon.* Foolish Jules! and yet, after all, why foolish? He may—probably will, fail egregiously; but if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way by a poet, now, or a musician, (spirits who have conceived and perfected an Ideal through some other channel) transferring it to this, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them; eh, Ugo? If you have no appetite, talk at least, Ugo!

*Inten.* Sir, I can submit no longer to this course of yours: first, you select the group of which I formed one,—next you thin it gradually,—always retaining me with your smile,—and so do you proceed till you have fairly got me alone with you between four stone walls: and now then? Let this farce, this chatter end now—what is it you want with me?

*Mon.* Ugo . . .

*Inten.* From the instant you arrived, I felt your

## PIPPA PASSES

smile on me as you questioned me about this and the other article in those papers—why your brother should have given me this villa, that *podere*,—and your nod at the end meant,—what?

*Mon.* Possibly that I wished for no loud talk here: if once you set me coughing, Ugo!—

*Inten.* I have your brother's hand and seal to all I possess: now ask me what for! what service I did him—ask me!

*Mon.* I had better not—I should rip up old disgraces—let out my poor brother's weaknesses. By the way, Maffeo of Forli, (which, I forgot to observe, is your true name) was the interdict ever taken off you, for robbing that church at Cesena?

*Inten.* No, nor needs be—for when I murdered your brother's friend, Pasquale, for him . . .

*Mon.* Ah, he employed you in that business, did he? Well, I must let you keep, as you say, this villa and that *podere*, for fear the world should find out my relations were of so indifferent a stamp! Maffeo, my family is the oldest in Messina, and century after century have my progenitors gone on polluting themselves with every wickedness under Heaven: my own father . . . rest his soul!—I have, I know, a chapel to support that it may rest: my dear two dead brothers were,—what you know tolerably well; I, the youngest, might have rivalled them in vice, if not in wealth, but from my boyhood I came out from among them, and so am not partaker of their plagues. My glory springs from another source; or if from this, by contrast only,—for I, the bishop, am the brother of your employers, Ugo. I hope to repair some of their wrong, however; so far as my brother's ill-gotten treasure reverts to me, I can stop the consequences of his crime; and not one *soldo* shall escape me. Maffeo, the sword we quiet men spurn away, you shrewd knaves pick up and commit murders with; what opportunities the virtuous forego, the villainous seize. Because, to pleasure myself, apart from other considerations, my food would be millet-cake, my dress sack-cloth,

## PIPPA PASSES

and my couch straw,—am I therefore to let you, the off-scouring of the earth, seduce the poor and ignorant, by appropriating a pomp these will be sure to think lessens the abominations so unaccountably and exclusively associated with it? Must I let villas and *poderes* go to you, a murderer and thief, that you may beget by means of them other murderers and thieves? No . . . if my cough would but allow me to speak!

*Inten.* What am I to expect? You are going to punish me?

*Mon.*—Must punish you, Maffeo. I cannot afford to cast away a chance. I have whole centuries of sin to redeem, and only a month or two of life to do it in! How should I dare to say . . .

*Inten.* “Forgive us our trespasses”—

*Mon.* My friend, it is because I avow myself a very worm, sinful beyond measure, that I reject a line of conduct you would applaud, perhaps: shall I proceed, as it were, a-pardoning?—I?—who have no symptom of reason to assume that aught less than my strenuous efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin, much less, keep others out. No—I do not trespass, but will not double that by allowing you to trespass.

*Inten.* And suppose the villas are not your brother's to give, nor yours to take? Oh, you are hasty enough just now!

*Mon.* 1, 2—No. 3!—ay, can you read the substance of a letter, No. 3, I have received from Rome? It is precisely on the ground there mentioned, of the suspicion I have that a certain child of my late elder brother, who would have succeeded to his estates, was murdered in infancy by you, Maffeo, at the instigation of my late brother—that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the bringing that Maffeo to condign punishment, but the taking all pains, as guardian of that infant's heritage for the Church, to recover it parcel by parcel, howsoever, whensoever, and wheresoever. While you are now gnawing those fingers, the police are engaged in sealing up your papers, Maffeo, and the mere raising my voice brings my people from the



## PIPPA PASSES

next room to dispose of yourself. But I want you to confess quietly, and save me raising my voice. Why, man, do I not know the old story? The heir between the succeeding heir, and that heir's ruffianly instrument, and their complot's effect, and the life of fear and bribes, and ominous smiling silence? Did you throttle or stab my brother's infant? Come, now!

*Inten.* So old a story, and tell it no better? When did such an instrument ever produce such an effect? Either the child smiles in his face, or, most likely, he is not fool enough to put himself in the employer's power so thoroughly—the child is always ready to produce—as you say—howsoever, wheresoever, and whensoever.

*Mon.* Liar!

*Inten.* Strike me? Ah, so might a father chastise! I shall sleep soundly to-night at least, though the gallows await me to-morrow; for what a life did I lead! Carlo of Cesena reminds me of his connivance, every time I pay his annuity (which happens commonly thrice a year). If I remonstrate, he will confess all to the good bishop—you!

*Mon.* I see thro' the trick, caitiff! I would you spoke truth for once; all shall be sifted, however—seven times sifted.

*Inten.* And how my absurd riches encumbered me! I dared not lay claim to above half my possessions. Let me but once embosom myself, glorify Heaven, and die!

Sir, you are no brutal, dastardly idiot like your brother I frightened to death—let us understand one another. Sir, I will make away with her for you—the girl—here close at hand; not the stupid obvious kind of killing; do not speak—know nothing of her or me! I see her every day—saw her this morning: of course there is to be no killing; but at Rome the courtesans perish off every three years, and I can entice her thither—have, indeed, begun operations already. There's a certain lusty, blue-eyed, florid-complexioned, English knave I and the Police employ occasionally.—

## PIPPA PASSES

You assent, I perceive—no, that's not it—assent I do not say—but you will let me convert my present havings and holdings into cash, and give me time to cross the Alps? 'Tis but a little black-eyed, pretty singing Felippa, gay silk-winding girl. I have kept her out of harm's way up to this present; for I always intended to make your life a plague to you with her! 'Tis as well settled once and for ever: some women I have procured will pass Bluphocks, my handsome scoundrel, off for somebody; and once Pippa entangled!—you conceive? Through her singing? Is it a bargain?

*(From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—*

*Over-head the tree-tops meet—  
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet—  
There was nought above me, and nought below,  
My childhood had not learned to know!  
For, what are the voices of birds  
—Ay, and of beasts,—but words—our words,  
Only so much more sweet?  
The knowledge of that with my life begun!  
But I had so near made out the sun,  
And counted your stars, the Seven and One,  
Like the fingers of my hand:  
Nay, I could all but understand  
Wherefore through heaven the white moon ranges;  
And just when out of her soft fifty changes  
No unfamiliar face might overlook me—  
Suddenly God took me!* (PIPPA passes.)

*Mon.* [Springing up.] My people—one and all—  
all—within there! Gag this villain—tie him hand and  
foot! He dares—I know not half he dares—but remove  
him—quick! *Miserere mei, Domine!* quick, I say!

PIPPA'S Chamber again. *She enters it.*  
The bee with his comb,  
The mouse at her dray,  
The grub in its tomb,

## PIPPA PASSES

Wile winter away;

But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-worm, I pray,  
How fare they?

Ha, ha, best thanks for your counsel, my Zanze—

“Feast upon lampreys, quaff the Breganze”—

The summer of life’s so easy to spend,

And care for to-morrow so soon put away!

But winter hastens at summer’s end,

And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm, pray,

How fare they?

No bidding me then to . . . what did she say?

“Pare your nails pearlwise, get your small feet shoes

“More like . . . (what said she?)—and less like  
canoes—”

How pert that girl was!—would I be those pert

Impudent staring women! it had done me,

However, surely no such mighty hurt

To learn his name who passed that jest upon me:

No foreigner, that I can recollect,

Came, as she says, a month since, to inspect

Our silk-mills—none with blue eyes and thick rings

Of English-coloured hair, at all events.

Well—if old Luca keeps his good intents,

We shall do better: see what next year brings

I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear

More destitute than you, perhaps, next year!

Bluph . . . something! I had caught the uncouth name

But for Monsignor’s people’s sudden clatter

Above us—bound to spoil such idle chatter

As ours; it were, indeed, a serious matter

If silly talk like ours should put to shame

The pious man, the man devoid of blame,

The . . . ah, but—ah, but, all the same,

No mere mortal has a right

To carry that exalted air;

Best people are not angels quite—

While—not the worst of people’s doings scare

The devils; so there’s that proud look to spare!

Which is mere counsel to myself, mind! for

I have just been the holy Monsignor!

## PIPPA PASSES

And I was you too, Luigi's gentle mother,  
And you too, Luigi!—how that Luigi started  
Out of the Turret—doubtlessly departed  
On some good errand or another,  
For he past just now in a traveller's trim,  
And the sullen company that prowled  
About his path, I noticed, scowled  
As if they had lost a prey in him.  
And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,  
And I was Ottima beside,  
And now what am I?—tired of fooling!  
Day for folly, night for schooling!  
New year's day is over and spent,  
Ill or well, I must be content!  
Even my lily's asleep, I vow:  
Wake up—here's a friend I've pluckt you.  
See—call this flower a heart's-ease now!  
And something rare, let me instruct you,  
Is this—with petals triply swollen,  
Three times spotted, thrice the pollen.  
While the leaves and parts that witness  
The old proportions and their fitness  
Here remain, unchanged unmoved now—  
So call this pampered thing improved now!  
Suppose there's a king of the flowers  
And a girl-show held in his bowers—  
“Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,”  
Says he, “Zanze from the Brenta,  
I have made her gorge polenta  
Till both cheeks are near as bouncing  
As her . . . name there's no pronouncing!  
See this heightened colour too—  
For she swilled Breganze wine  
Till her nose turned deep carmine—  
’Twas but white when wild she grew!  
And only by this Zanze's eyes  
Of which we could not change the size,  
The magnitude of what's achieved  
Otherwise, may be perceived!”

## PIPPA PASSES

Oh what a drear, dark close to my poor day!  
How could that red sun drop in that black cloud!  
Ah, Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,  
Dispensed with, never more to be allowed,  
Day's turn is over—now arrives the night's—  
Oh, Lark, be day's apostle  
To mavis, merle and throstle,  
Bid them their betters jostle  
From day and its delights!  
But at night, brother Howlet, far over the woods,  
Toll the world to thy chantry—  
Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods  
Full complines with gallantry—  
Then, owls and bats, crows and twats,  
Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,  
Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry!

*[After she has begun to undress herself]*

Now, one thing I should like really to know:  
How near I ever might approach all these  
I only fancied being, this long day—  
—Approach, I mean, so as to touch them—so  
As to . . . in some way . . . move them—if you please,  
Do good or evil to them some slight way.  
For instance, if I wind  
Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind

*[Sitting on the bedside.]*

And broider Ottima's cloak's hem—  
Ah, me and my important part with them,  
This morning's hymn half promised when I rose!  
True in some sense or other, I suppose,  
Though I passed by them all, and felt no sign.

*[As she lies down.]*

God bless me! I can pray no more to-night.  
No doubt, some way or other, hymns say right.  
*All service is the same with God—  
With God, whose puppets, best and worst,  
Are we: there is no last nor first.—*

*[She sleeps.]*



**KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES**

**A TRAGEDY**

## NOTE

So far as I know, this Tragedy is the first artistic consequence of what Voltaire termed 'a terrible event without consequences : ' and although it professes to be historical, I have taken more pains to arrive at the history than most readers would thank me for particularizing : since acquainted, as I will hope them to be, with the chief circumstances of Victor's remarkable European career—nor quite ignorant of the sad and surprising facts I am about to reproduce (a tolerable account of which is to be found, for instance, in Abbé Roman's *Récit*, or even the fifth of Lord Orrery's Letters from Italy)—I cannot expect them to be versed, nor desirous of becoming so, in all the details of the memoirs, correspondence, and relations of the time. From these only may be obtained a knowledge of the fiery and audacious temper, unscrupulous selfishness, profound dissimulation, and singular fertility in resources, of Victor—the extreme and painful sensibility, prolonged immaturity of powers, earnest good purpose and vacillating will of Charles—the noble and right woman's manliness of his wife—and the ill-considered rascality and subsequent better-advised rectitude of D'Ormea. When I say, therefore, that I cannot but believe my statement (combining as it does what appears correct in Voltaire and plausible in Condorcet) more true to person and thing than any it has hitherto been my fortune to meet with, no doubt my word will be taken, and my evidence spared as readily.



# KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

## PERSONS

VICTOR AMADEUS, First King of Sardinia.

CHARLES EMMANUEL, his Son, Prince of Piedmont

POLYXENA, Wife of Charles.

D'ORMEA, Minister.

SCENE.—The Council Chamber of Rivoli Palace, near  
Turin, communicating with a Hall at the back,  
an Apartment to the left and another to the right  
of the stage.

TIME, 1730-1

FIRST YEAR, 1730

KING VICTOR. PART I

CHARLES, POLYXENA.

*Cha.* You think so? Well, I do not.

*Pol.* My beloved,

All must clear up—we shall be happy yet:  
This cannot last for ever . . oh, may change  
To-day, or any day!

*Cha.* —May change? Ah yes—

May change!

*Pol.* Endure it, then.

*Cha.* No doubt, a life

Like this drags on, now better and now worse;

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

My father may . . . may take to loving me;  
And he may take, too, D'Ormea closer yet  
To counsel him;—may even cast off her  
—That bad Sebastian; but he also may  
. . Or, no, Polyxena, my only friend,  
He may not force you from me?

*Pol.*

Now, force me

From you!—me, close by you as if there gloomed  
No D'Ormeas, no Sebastians on our path—  
At Rivoli or Turin, still at hand,  
Arch-Counsellor, prime confidant . . . force me!

*Cha.* Because I felt as sure, as I feel sure  
We clasp hands now, of being happy once.  
Young was I, quite neglected, nor concerned  
By the world's business that engrossed so much  
My father and my brother: if I peered  
From out my privacy,—amid the crash  
And blaze of nations, domineered those two;  
Twas war, peace—France our foe, now—England,  
friend—

In love with Spain—at fued with Austria!—Well—  
I wondered—laughed a moment's laugh for pride  
In the chivalrous couple—then let drop  
My curtain—"I am out of it," I said—  
When . . .

*Pol.* You have told me, Charles.

*Cha.*

Polyxena—

When suddenly,—a warm March day, just that!  
Just so much sunshine as the cottager's child  
Basks in delighted, while the cottager  
Takes off his bonnet, as he ceases work,  
To catch the more of it—and it must fall  
Heavily on my brother . . . had you seen  
Philip—the lion-featured!—not like me!

*Pol.* I know—

*Cha.*

And Philip's mouth yet fast to mine,  
His dead cheek on my cheek, his arm still round  
My neck,—they bade me rise, "for I was heir  
To the Duke," they said, "the right hand of the Duke;"  
Till then he was my father, not the Duke!

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

So . . let me finish . . the whole intricate  
World's business their dead boy was born to, I  
Must conquer,—ay, the brilliant thing he was,  
I, of a sudden, must be: my faults, my follies,  
—All bitter truths were told me, all at once  
To end the sooner. What I simply styled  
Their overlooking me, had been contempt.  
How should the Duke employ himself, forsooth,  
With such an one while lordly Philip rode  
By him their Turin through? But he was punished  
And must put up with—me! 'Twas sad enough  
To learn my future portion and submit—  
And then the wear and worry, blame on blame!  
—For, spring-sounds in my ears, spring-smells about,  
How could I but grow dizzy in their pent  
Dim palace-rooms at first? My mother's look  
As they discussed my insignificance—  
(She and my father, and I sitting by,)—  
I bore:—I knew how brave a son they missed:  
Philip had gaily passed state-papers o'er,  
While Charles was spelling at them painfully!  
But Victor was my father spite of that.  
“Duke Victor's entire life has been,” I said,  
“Innumerable efforts to one end;  
And, on the point now of that end's success,  
Our Ducal turning to a Kingly crown,  
Where's time to be reminded 'tis his child  
He spurns?” And so I suffered . . yet scarce suffered,  
Since I had you at length!

*Pol.* —To serve in place  
Of monarch, minister and mistress, Charles.

*Cha.* But, once that crown obtained, then was't  
not like

Our lot would alter?—“When he rests, takes breath,  
Glances around, and sees who's left to love—  
Now that my mother's dead, sees I am left—  
Is it not like he'd love me at the last?”  
Well: Savoy turns Sardinia—the Duke's King!  
Could I—precisely then—could you expect  
His harshness to redouble? These few months

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

Have been . . . have been . . . Polyxena, do you  
And God conduct me, or I lose myself!  
What would he have? What is't they want with  
me?

Him with this mistress and this minister,  
—You see me and you hear him; judge us both!  
Pronounce what I should do, Polyxena!

*Pol.* Endure, endure, beloved! Say you not  
That he's your Father? All's so incident  
To novel sway! Beside, our life must change:  
Or you'll acquire his kingcraft, or he'll find  
Harshness a sorry way of teaching it.

I bear this—not that there's so much to bear—

*Cha.* You bear it? don't I know that you, tho'  
bound

To silence for my sake, are perishing  
Piecemeal beside me? And how otherwise?  
—When every creephole from the hideous Court  
Is stopt; the Minister to dog me, here—  
The Mistress posted to entrap you, there!  
And thus shall we grow old in such a life—  
Not careless,—never estranged,—but old: to alter  
Our life, there is so much to alter!

*Pol.* Come—

Is it agreed that we forego complaints  
Even at Turin, yet complain we here  
At Rivoli? 'Twere wiser you announced  
Our presence to the King. What's now afoot,  
I wonder?—Not that any more's to dread  
Than every day's embarrassment—but guess,  
For me, why train so fast succeeded train  
On the high-road, each gayer still than each;  
I noticed your Archbishop's pursuivant,  
The sable cloak and silver cross; such pomp  
Bodes . . . what now, Charles? Can you conceive?

*Cha.* Not I.

*Pol.* A matter of some moment—

*Cha.* There's our life!

Which of the group of loiterers that stared  
From the lime-avenue, divines that I—

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

About to figure presently, he thinks,  
In face of all assembled—am the one  
Who knows precisely least about it?

*Pol.*

Tush!

D'Ormea's contrivance!

*Cha.*

Ay—how otherwise  
Should the young Prince serve for the old King's foil?  
—So that the simplest courtier may remark,  
'Twere idle raising parties for a Prince  
Content to linger D'Ormea's laughing-stock!  
Something, 'tis like, about that weary business

*[Pointing to papers he has laid down, and which*

*POLYXENA examines.]*

—Not that I comprehend three words, of course,  
After all last night's study.

*Pol.*

The faint heart!

Why, as we rode and you rehearsed just now  
Its substance . . (that's the folded speech I mean,  
Concerning the Reduction of the Fiets . . )  
—What would you have?—I fancied while you spoke,  
Some tones were just your father's.

*Cha.*

Flattery!

*Pol.* I fancied so:—and here lurks, sure enough,  
My note upon the Spanish Claims! You've mastered  
The fief-speech thoroughly—this other, mind,  
Is an opinion you deliver,—stay,  
Best read it slowly over once to me;  
Read—there's bare time; you read it firmly—loud  
—Rather loud—looking in his face,—don't sink  
Your eye once—ay, thus! “If Spain claims . . .” begin  
—Just as you look at me!

*Cha.*

At you! Oh, truly,

You have I seen, say, marshalling your troops—  
Dismissing councils—or, through doors ajar,  
Head sunk on hand, devoured by slow chagrins  
—Then radiant, for a crown had all at once  
Seemed possible again! I can behold  
Him, whose least whisper ties my spirit fast,  
In this sweet brow, nought could divert me from,  
Save objects like Sebastian's shameless lip,

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

Or, worse, the clipt grey hair and dead white face,  
And dwindling eye as if it ached with guile,  
Which D'Ormea wears . . .

[*As he kisses her, enter from the KING's apartment*  
D'ORMEA.]

. . . I said he would divert

My kisses from your brow!

D'O. [*Aside.*] Here! So King Victor  
Spoke truth for once; and who's ordained, but I,  
To make that memorable? Both in call,  
As he declared! Were't better gnash the teeth,  
Or laugh outright now?

Cha. [*to Pol.*] What's his visit for?

D'O. [*Aside.*] I question if they'll even speak to me.

Pol. [*to Cha.*] Face D'Ormea, he'll suppose you fear  
him, else.

[*Aloud.*] The Marquis bears the King's command, no  
doubt.

D'O. [*Aside.*] Precisely!—If I threatened him, perhaps?  
Well, this at least is punishment enough!  
Men used to promise punishment would come.

Cha. Deliver the King's message, Marquis!

D'O. [*Aside.*] Ah—  
So anxious for his fate? [*Aloud.*] A word, my Prince,  
Before you see your father—just one word  
Of counsel!

Cha. Oh, your counsel certainly—  
Polyxena, the Marquis counsels us!  
Well, sir? Be brief, however!

D'O. What? you know  
As much as I?—preceded me, most like,  
In knowledge? So! ('Tis in his eye, beside—  
His voice—he knows it and his heart's on flame  
Already!) You surmise why you, myself,  
Del Borgo, Spava, fifty nobles more,  
Are summoned thus?

Cha. Is the Prince used to know,  
At any time, the pleasure of the King,  
Before his minister?—Polyxena,  
Stay here till I conclude my task—I feel

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

Your presence—(smile not)—thro' the walls, and take  
Fresh heart. The King's within that chamber?

*D'O.* [*Passing the table whereon a paper lies, exclaims,  
as he glances at it,*] "Spain!"

*Pol.* [*Aside to Cha.*] Tarry awhile: what ails the  
minister?

*D'O.* Madam, I do not often trouble you.

The Prince loathes, and you loathe me—let that pass;  
But since it touches him and you, not me,  
Bid the Prince listen!

*Pol.* [*to Cha.*] Surely you will listen!

—Deceit?—Those fingers crumpling up his vest?

*Cha.* Deceitful to the very fingers' ends!

*D'O* [*who has approached them, overlooks the other  
paper CHARLES continues to hold.*]

My project for the Fiefs! As I supposed!

Sir, I must give you light upon those measures

—For this is mine, and that I spied of Spain,

Mine too!

*Cha.* Release me! Do you gloze on me

Who bear in the world's face (that is, the world

You've made for me at Turin) your contempt?

—Your measures?—When was any hateful task

Not D'Ormea's imposition? Leave my robe!

What post can I bestow, what grant concede?

Or do you take me for the King?

*D'O.* Not I!

Not yet for King,—not for, as yet, thank God,

One, who in . . shall I say a year—a month?

Ay!—shall be wretcheder than e'er was slave

In his Sardinia,—Europe's spectacle,

And the world's bye-word! What? The Prince aggrieved

That I've excluded him our counsels? Here

[*Touching the paper in CHARLES's hand.*]

Accept a method of extorting gold

From Savoy's nobles, who must wring its worth

In silver first from tillers of the soil,

Whose hinds again have to contribute brass

To make up the amount—there's counsel, sir!

My counsel, one year old; and the fruit, this—

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

Savoy's become a mass of misery  
And wrath, which one man has to meet —the King :  
You're not the King! Another counsel, sir!  
Spain entertains a project (here it lies)  
Which, guessed, makes Austria offer that same King  
Thus much to baffle Spain; he promises;  
Then comes Spain, breathless lest she be forestalled,  
Her offer follows; and he promises . . .

*Cha.*—Promises, sir, when he before agreed  
To Austria's offer?

*D'O.* That's a counsel, Prince!  
But past our foresight, Spain and Austria (choosing  
To make their quarrel up between themselves  
Without the intervention of a friend)  
Produce both treaties, and both promises . . .

*Cha.* How?

*D'O.* Prince, a counsel!—And the fruit of that?  
Both parties covenant afresh, to fall  
Together on their friend, blot out his name,  
Abolish him from Europe. So take note,  
Here's Austria and here's Spain to fight against,  
And what sustains the King but Savoy here,  
A miserable people mad with wrongs?  
You're not the King!

*Cha.* Polyxena, you said  
All would clear up—all does clear up to me!

*D'O.* Clears up? 'Tis no such thing to envy, then?  
You see the King's state in its length and breadth?  
You blame me, now, for keeping you aloof  
From counsels and the fruit of counsels?—Wait  
Till I've explained this morning's business!

*Cha.* [*Aside.*] No—  
Stoop to my father, yes,—to D'Ormea, no;  
—The King's son, not to the King's counsellor!  
I will do something,—but at least retain  
The credit of my deed! [*Aloud.*] Then, D'Ormea, this  
You now expressly come to tell me?

*D'O.* This  
To tell! You apprehend me?

*Cha.* Perfectly.



## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

And further, D'Ormea, you have shown yourself,  
For the first time these many weeks and months,  
Disposed to do my bidding?

*D'O.*

From the heart!

*Cha.* Acquaint my father, first, I wait his pleasure:  
Next . . . or, I'll tell you at a fitter time.  
Acquaint the King!

*D'O.* [*Aside.*]

If I 'scape Victor yet!

First, to prevent this stroke at me—if not,—  
Then, to avenge it! [*To CHA.*] Gracious sir, I go. [*Goes.*]

*Cha.* God, I forbore! Which more offends—that man  
Or that man's master? Is it come to this?  
Have they supposed (the sharpest insult yet)  
I needed e'en his intervention? No!  
No, dull am I, conceded,—but so dull,  
Scarcely! Their step decides me.

*Pol.*

How decides?

*Cha.* You would be free from D'Ormea's eye and hers?  
—Could fly the court with me and live content?  
So—this it is for which the knights assemble!  
The whispers and the closeting of late,  
The savageness and insolence of old,  
—For this!

*Pol.*

What mean you?

*Cha.*

How? you fail to catch

Their clever plot? I missed it—but could you?  
These last two months of care to inculcate  
How dull I am,—with D'Ormea's present visit  
To prove that, being dull, I might be worse  
Were I a king—as wretched as now dull—  
You recognise in it no winding up  
Of a long plot?

*Pol.*

Why should there be a plot?

*Cha.* The crown's secure now; I should shame the  
crown—

An old complaint; the point is, how to gain  
My place for one more fit in Victor's eyes,  
His mistress', the Sebastian's child.

*Pol.*

In truth?

*Cha.* They dare not quite dethrone Sardinia's Prince:

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

But they may descant on my dulness till  
They sting me into even praying them  
For leave to hide my head, resign my state,  
And end the coil. Not see now? In a word,  
They'd have me tender them myself my rights  
As one incapable:—some cause for that,  
Since I delayed thus long to see their drift!  
I shall apprise the King he may resume  
My rights this moment.

*Pol.* Pause—I dare not think  
So ill of Victor.

*Cha.* Think no ill of him!

*Pol.*—Nor think him, then, so shallow as to suffer  
His purpose be divined thus easily.  
And yet—you are the last of a great line;  
There's a great heritage at stake; new days  
Seemed to await this newest of the realms  
Of Europe:—Charles; you must withstand this!

*Cha.*

Ah—

You dare not then renounce the splendid court  
For one whom all the world despises? Speak!

*Pol.* My gentle husband, speak I will, and truth.  
Were this as you believe, and I once sure  
Your duty lay in so renouncing rule,  
I could . . could? Oh, what happiness it were—  
To live, my Charles, and die alone with you!

*Cha.* I grieve I asked you. To the Presence, then!  
D'Ormea acquaints the King by this, no doubt,  
He fears I am too simple for mere hints,  
And that no less will serve than Victor's mouth  
Teaching me in full council what I am.  
—I have not breathed, I think, these many years!

*Pol.* Why—it may be!—if he desires to wed  
That woman and legitimate her child—

*Cha.* You see as much? Oh, let his will have way!  
You'll not repent confiding in me, love?  
There's many a brighter spot in Piedmont, far,  
Than Rivoli. I'll seek him—or, suppose  
You hear first how I mean to speak my mind?  
—Loudly and firmly both, this time, be sure!

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

I yet may see your Rhine-land—who can tell?  
Once away, ever then away! I breathe.

*Pol.* And I too breathe!

*Cha.*

Come, my Polyxena!

### KING VICTOR: PART II.

*Enter KING VICTOR, bearing the regalia on a cushion  
from his apartment. He calls loudly.*

D'Ormea!—for patience fails me, treading thus  
Among the trains that I have laid,—my knights,  
Safe in the hall here—in that anteroom,  
My son,—and D'Ormea, where? Of this, one touch—  
[*Laying down the crown.*

This fireball to these mute, black, cold trains—then!  
Outbreak enough!

[*Contemplating it.*] To lose all, after all!

This—glancing o'er my house for ages—shaped,  
Brave meteor, like the Crown of Cyprus now—  
Jerusalem, Spain, England—every change  
The braver,—and when I have clutched a prize  
My ancestry died wan with watching for,  
To lose it!—by a slip—a fault—a trick  
Learnt to advantage once, and not unlearned  
When past the use,—“just this once more” (I thought)  
“Use it with Spain and Austria happily,  
And then away with trick!”—An oversight  
I'd have repaired thrice over, any time  
These fifty years, must happen now! There's peace  
At length; and I, to make the most of peace,  
Ventured my project on our people here,  
As needing not their help—which Europe knows,  
And means, cold-blooded, to dispose herself  
(Apart from plausibilities of war)  
To crush the new-made King—who ne'er till now  
Feared her. As Duke, I lost each foot of earth

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

And laughed at her: my name was left, my sword  
Left, all was left! But she can take, she knows,  
This crown, herself conceded . . .

That's to try,  
Kind Europe! My career's not closed as yet!  
'This boy was ever subject to my will—  
Timid and tame—the fitter! D'Ormea, too—  
What if the sovereign's also rid of thee  
His prime of parasites?—Yet I delay!  
D'Ormea! [*As D'Ormea enters, the King seats himself.*

My son, the Prince—attends he?

D'O. . . . . Sire,  
He does attend. The crown prepared!—it seems  
That you persist in your resolve.

Vic. . . . . Who's come?  
The chancellor and the chamberlain? My knights?

D'O. The whole Annunziata.—If, my liege,  
Your fortunes had not tottered worse than now . . .

Vic. Del Borgo has drawn up the schedules? mine—  
My son's too? Excellent! Only, beware  
Of the least blunder, or we look but fools.  
First, you read the Annulment of the Oaths;  
Del Borgo follows . . no, the Prince shall sign;  
Then let Del Borgo read the Instrument—  
On which, I enter.—

D'O. . . . . Sire, this may be truth;  
You, sire, may do as you affect—may break  
Your engine, me, to pieces: try at least  
If not a spring remains worth saving! Take  
My counsel as I've counselled many times!  
What if the Spaniard and the Austrian threat?  
There's England, Holland, Venice—which ally  
Select you?

Vic. . . . . Aha! Come, my D'Ormea,—“truth”  
Was on your lip a minute since. Allies?  
I've broken faith with Venice, Holland, England.  
—As who knows if not you?

D'O. . . . . But why with me  
Break faith—with one ally, your best, break faith?

Vic. When first I stumbled on you, Marquis—('twas

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

At Mondovi—a little lawyer's clerk . . .)

*D'O.* . . . Therefore your soul's ally!—who brought you through

Your quarrel with the Pope, at pains enough—

Who've simply echoed you in these affairs—

On whom you cannot, therefore, visit these

Affairs' ill fortune—whom you'll trust to guide

You safe (yes, on my soul) in these affairs!

*Vic.* I was about to notice, had you not

Prevented me, that since that great town kept

With its chicane my D'Ormea's satchel stuffed,

And D'Ormea's self sufficiently recluse,

He missed a sight,—my naval armament

When I burnt Toulon. How the skiff exults

Upon the galliot's wave!—rises its height,

O'ertops it even; but the great wave bursts—

And hell-deep in the horrible profound

Buries itself the galliot:—shall the skiff

Think to escape the sea's black trough in turn?

Apply this: you have been my minister

—Next me—above me, possibly;—sad post,

Huge care, abundant lack of peace of mind;

Who would desiderate the eminence?

You gave your soul to get it—you'd yet give

Your soul to keep it, as I mean you shall,

My D'Ormea! What if the wave ebb'd with me?

Whereas it cants you to another's crest—

I toss you to my son; ride out your ride!

*D'O.* Ah, you so much despise me then?

*Vic.* . . . You, D'Ormea?

Nowise: and I'll inform you why. A King

Must in his time have many ministers,

And I've been rash enough to part with mine

When I thought proper. Of the tribe, not one

( . . Or wait, did Pianezze? . . ah, just the same!)

Not one of them, ere his remonstrance reached

The length of yours, but has assured me (commonly,

Standing much as you stand,—or nearer, say,

The door to make his exit on his speech)

--I should repent of what I did: now, D'Ormea,

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

(Be candid—you approached it when I bade you  
Prepare the schedules! But you stopped in time)  
—You have not so assured me: how should I  
Despise you, then?

*Enter CHARLES.*

*Vic. [changing his tone.]* Are you instructed? Do  
My order, point by point! About it, sir!

*D'O.* You so despise me? [*Aside.*] One last stay  
remains—

The boy's discretion there. [*to CHARLES.*]

For your sake, Prince,

I pleaded—wholly in your interest—

To save you from this fate!

*Cha. [Aside.]* Must I be told  
The Prince was supplicated for—by him?

*Vic. [to D'O.]* Apprise Del Borgo, Spava, and the rest,  
Our son attends them; then return.

*D'O.* One word.

*Cha. [Aside.]* A moment's pause and they would  
drive me hence,

I do believe!

*D'O. [Aside.]* Let but the boy be firm!

*Vic.* You disobey?

*Cha. [to D'O.]* You do not disobey  
Me, D'Ormea? Did you promise that or no?

*D'O.* Sir, I am yours—what would you? Yours  
am I!

*Cha.* When I have said what I shall say, 'tis like  
Your face will ne'er again disgust me. Go!

Through you, as through a breast of glass, I see.

And for your conduct, from my youth till now,

Take my contempt! You might have spared me much,

Secured me somewhat, nor so harmed yourself—

That's over now. Go—ne'er to come again!

*D'O.* As son, the father—father as, the son!

My wits! My wits! [*Goes.*]

*Vic. [Seated.]* And you, what meant you, pray,  
By speaking thus to D'Ormea?

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

*Cha.* Let us not  
Weary ourselves with D'Ormea! Those few words  
Have half unsettled what I came to say.  
His presence vexes to my very soul.

*Vic.* One called to manage kingdoms, Charles, needs  
heart  
To bear up under worse annoyances  
Than D'Ormea seems—to me, at least.

*Cha.* [*Aside.*] Ah, good!  
He keeps me to the point! Then be it so.  
[*Aloud.*] Last night, Sire, brought me certain papers—  
these—  
To be reported on,—your way of late.  
Is it last night's result that you demand?

*Vic.* For God's sake, what has night brought forth?  
Pronounce  
The . . . what's your word?—result!

*Cha.* Sire, that had proved  
Quite worthy of your sneers, no doubt:—a few  
Lame thoughts, regard for you alone could wring,  
Lame as they are, from brains, like mine believe!  
As 'tis, sire, I am spared both toil and sneer.  
There are the papers.

*Vic.* Well, sir? I suppose  
You hardly burned them. Now for your result.

*Cha.* I never should have done great things of  
course,

But . . . oh, my father, had you loved me more . . .

*Vic.* Loved you? [*Aside.*] Has D'Ormea played me  
false, I wonder?

[*Aloud.*] Why, Charles, a king's love is diffused—your-  
self

May overlook, perchance, your part in it.  
Our monarchy is absolutest now  
In Europe, or my trouble's thrown away:  
I love, my mode, that subjects each and all  
May have the power of loving, all and each,  
Their mode: I doubt not, many have their sons  
To trifle with, talk soft to, all day long—  
I have that crown, this chair, and D'Ormea, Charles?

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

*Cha.* 'Tis well I am a subject then, not you.

*Vic.* [*Aside.*] D'Ormea has told him everything.

[*Aloud.*] Aha!

I apprehend you: when all's said, you take  
Your private station to be prized beyond  
My own for instance?

*Cha.* —Do and ever did  
So take it: 'tis the method you pursue  
That grieves . . .

*Vic.* These words! Let me express, my friend,  
Your thought. You penetrate what I supposed  
A secret. D'Ormea plies his trade betimes!  
I purpose to resign my crown to you.

*Cha.* To me?

*Vic.* Now—in that chamber.

*Cha.* You resign  
The crown to me?

*Vic.* And time enough, Charles, sure?  
Confess with me, at four-and-sixty years  
A crown's a load. I covet quiet once  
Before I die, and summoned you for that.

*Cha.* 'Tis I will speak: you ever hated me,  
I bore it,—have insulted me, borne too—  
Now you insult yourself, and I remember  
What I believed you, what you really are,  
And cannot bear it. What! My life has passed  
Under your eye, tormented as you know,—  
Your whole sagacities, one after one,  
At leisure brought to play on me—to prove me  
A fool, I thought, and I submitted; now  
You'd prove . . . what would you prove me?

*Vic.* This to me?  
I hardly know you!

*Cha.* Know me? Oh, indeed  
You do not! Wait till I complain next time  
Of my simplicity!—for here's a sage—  
Knows the world well—is not to be deceived—  
And his experience, and his Macchiavels,  
His D'Ormeas, teach him—what?—that I, this while,  
Have envied him his crown! He has not smiled,



## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

I warrant,—has not eaten, drunk, nor slept,  
For I was plotting with my Princess yonder!  
Who knows what we might do, or might not do?  
Go, now—be politic—astound the world!—  
That sentry in the antechamber . . . nay,  
The varlet who disposed this precious trap

*[Pointing to the crown.]*

That was to take me—ask them if they think  
Their own sons envy them their posts!—Know me!

*Vic.* But you know me, it seems; so learn in brief  
My pleasure. This assembly is convened . . .

*Cha.* Tell me, that woman put it in your head—  
You were not sole contriver of the scheme,  
My father!

*Vic.* Now observe me, sir! I jest  
Seldom—on these points, never. Here, I say,  
The Knights assemble to see me concede,  
And you accept, Sardinia's crown.

*Cha.* Farewell!

'Twere vain to hope to change this—I can end it.  
Not that I cease from being yours, when sunk  
Into obscurity. I'll die for you,  
But not annoy you with my presence—Sire,  
Farewell! Farewell!

*Enter D'ORMEA.*

*D'O. [Aside]* Ha, sure he's changed again—  
Means not to fall into the cunning trap—  
Then, Victor, I shall yet escape you, Victor!

*Vic. [suddenly placing the crown upon the head of*  
*CHARLES.]*

D'Ormea, your King!

*[To CHARLES.]* My son, obey me! Charles,  
Your father, clearer-sighted than yourself,  
Decides it must be so. 'Faith, this looks real!  
My reasons after—reason upon reason  
After—but now, obey me! Trust in me!  
By this, you save Sardinia, you save me!  
Why the boy swoons! *[To D'O.]* Come this side!

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

*D'O.* [*as CHARLES turns from him to VICTOR.*]

You persist?

*Vic.* Yes—I conceive the gesture's meaning. 'Faith, He almost seems to hate you—how is that? Be re-assured, my Charles! Is't over now? Then, Marquis, tell the new King what remains To do! A moment's work. Del Borgo reads The act of Abdication out, you sign it, Then I sign; after that, come back to me.

*D'O.* Sire, for the last time, pause!

*Vic.*

Five minutes longer

I am your sovereign, Marquis. Hesitate— And I'll so turn those minutes to account That . . . Ay, you recollect me!

[*Aside.*] Could I bring

My foolish mind to undergo the reading That Act of Abdication!

[*As CHARLES motions D'ORMEA to precede him.*

Thanks, dear Charles!

[*CHARLES and D'ORMEA retire.*

*Vic.* A novel feature in the boy,—indeed Just what I feared he wanted most. Quite right, This earnest tone—your truth, now, for effect! It answers every purpose: with that look, That voice,—I hear him: "I began no treaty," (He speaks to Spain,) "nor ever dreamed of this "You show me; this I from my soul regret; "But if my father signed it, bid not me "Dishonour him—who gave me all, beside." And, "truth," says Spain, "'twere harsh to visit that "Upon the Prince." Then come the nobles trooping: "I grieve at these exactions—I had cut "This hand off ere impose them; but shall I "Undo my father's deed?"—And they confer: "Doubtless he was no party, after all; "Give the Prince time!"—

Ay, give us time—but time!

Only, he must not, when the dark day comes, Refer our friends to me and frustrate all. We'll have no child's play, no desponding-fits,

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

No Charles at each cross turn entreating Victor  
To take his crown again. Guard against that!

*Enter D'ORMEA.*

Long live King Charles!—

No—Charles's counsellor!

Well, is it over, Marquis? Did I jest?

*D'O.* "King Charles!" What then may you be?

*Vic.* Anything!

A country gentleman that's cured of bustle,  
And beats a quick retreat toward Chambery  
To hunt and hawk, and leave you noisy folk  
To drive your trade without him. I'm Count Remont—  
Count Tende—any little place's Count!

*D'O.* Then, Victor, Captain against Catinat,  
At Staffarde, where the French beat you; and Duke  
At Turin, where you beat the French; King, late,  
Of Savoy, Piedmont, Montferrat, Sardinia,  
—Now, "any little place's Count"—

*Vic.* Proceed!

*D'O.* Breaker of vows to God, who crowned you  
first;

Breaker of vows to Man, who kept you since;  
Most profligate to me, who outraged God  
And Man to serve you, and am made pay crimes  
I was but privy to, by passing thus  
To your imbecile son—who, well you know,  
Must, (when the people here, and nations there,  
Clamour for you, the main delinquent, slipt  
From King to—Count of any little place)  
—Surrender me, all left within his reach,—  
I, sir, forgive you: for I see the end—  
See you on your return (you will return)  
To him you trust in for the moment . . .

*Vic.* How?

Trust in him? (merely a prime-minister  
This D'Ormea!) How trust in him?

*D'O.* In his fear—

His love,—but pray discover for yourself

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

What you are weakest, trusting in!

*Vic.*

*Aha,*

My D'Ormea, not a shrewder scheme than this  
In your repertory? You know old Victor—  
Vain, choleric, inconstant, rash—(I've heard  
Talkers who little thought the King so close)  
Felicitous, now, were't not, to provoke him  
To clean forget, one minute afterward,  
His solemn act—to call the nobles back  
And pray them give again the very power  
He has abjured!—for the dear sake of—what?  
Vengeance on you! No, D'Ormea: such am I,  
Count Tende or Count anything you please,  
—Only, the same that did the things you say,  
And, among other things you say not, used  
Your finest fibre, meanest muscle,—you  
I used, and now, since you will have it so,  
Leave to your fate—mere lumber in the midst,  
You and your works—Why, what on earth beside  
Are you made for, you sort of ministers?

*D'O.* —Not left, though, to my fate! Your witless

### SCENE III

Has more wit than to load himself with lumber:  
He foils you that way, and I follow you.

*Vic.* Stay with my son—protect the weaker side!

*D'O.* Ay, be tossed to the people like a rag,  
And flung by them to Spain and Austria—so  
Abolishing the record of your part  
In all this perfidy!

*Vic.* Prevent, beside,  
My own return!

*D'O.* That's half prevented now!  
'Twill go hard but you'll find a wondrous charm  
In exile, to discredit me. The Alps—  
Silk-mills to watch—vines asking vigilance—  
Hounds open for the stag—your hawk's a-wing—  
Brave days that wait the Louis of the South,  
Italy's Janus!

*Vic.* So, the lawyer's clerk  
Won't tell me that I shall repent!

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

D'O. . . . . You give me

Full leave to ask if you repent?

*Vic.* Whene'er,  
Sufficient time's elapsed for that, you judge!

[Shouts inside, "KING CHARLES."

*D'O.* Do you repent?

Vic. [after a slight pause.] . . . I've kept them waiting? Yes!

Come in—complete the Abdication, sir! [*They go out.*]

*Enter* POLYXENA.

*Pol.* A shout? The sycophants are free of Charles!

Oh, is not this like Italy? No fruit

Of his or my distempered fancy, this—

But just an ordinary fact! Beside,

Here they've set forms for such proceedings—Victor  
Imprisoned his own mother—he should know.

If any, how a son's to be deprived

Of a son's right. Our duty's palpable.

Ne'er was my husband for the wily king

And the unworthy subjects—be it so!

Come you safe out of them, my Charles! Our life

Grows not the broad and dazzling life, I dreamed

Might prove your lot—for strength was shut in you

None guessed but I—strength which, untrammelled  
once,

Had little shamed your vaunted ancestry—

Patience and self-devotion, fortitude,

### Simplicity and utter truthfulness

—All which they shout to lose!

So, now my work

Beginns—to save him from regret. Save Charles

Regret?—the noble nature! He's not made

Like the Italians: 'tis a German soul.

CHARLES *enters crowned.*

Oh, where's the King's heir? Gone:—the Crown-prince? Gone—

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

Where's Savoy? Gone:—Sardinia? Gone!—But Charles  
Is left! And when my Rhine-land bowers arrive,  
If he looked almost handsome yester-twilight  
As his grey eyes seemed widening into black  
Because I praised him, then how will he look?  
Farewell, you stripped and whited mulberry-trees  
Bound each to each by lazy ropes of vine!  
Now I'll teach you my language—I'm not forced  
To speak Italian now, Charles?

[*She sees the crown.*]

What is this?

Answer me—who has done this? Answer!

*Cha.*

He!

I am King now.

*Pol.*

Oh worst, worst, worst of all!

Tell me—what, Victor? He has made you King?

What's he then? What's to follow this? You, King?

*Cha.* Have I done wrong? Yes—for you were not by!

*Pol.* Tell me from first to last.

*Cha.*

Hush—a new world

Brightens before me; he is moved away

—The dark form that eclipsed it, he subsides

Into a shape supporting me like you,

And I, alone, tend upward, more and more

Tend upward: I am grown Sardinia's King.

*Pol.* Now stop: was not this Victor, Duke of Savoy  
At ten years old?

*Cha.*

He was.

*Pol.*

And the Duke spent

Since then, just four-and-fifty years in toil

To be—what?

*Cha.*

King.

*Pol.*

Then why unking himself?

*Cha.* Those years are cause enough.

*Pol.*

The only cause?

*Cha.* Some new perplexities.

*Pol.*

Which you can solve,

Although he cannot?

*Cha.*

He assures me so.

*Pol.* And this he means shall last—how long?

*Cha.*

How long?

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

Think you I fear the perils I confront?  
He's praising me before the people's face—  
My people!

*Pol.* Then he's changed—grown kind, the King?  
(Where can the trap be?)

*Cha.* Heart and soul I pledge!  
My father, could I guard the Crown you gained,  
Transmit as I received it,—all good else  
Would I surrender!

*Pol.* Ah, it opens then  
Before you—all you dreaded formerly?  
You are rejoiced to be a king, my Charles?

*Cha.* So much to dare? The better;—much to dread?  
The better. I'll adventure tho' alone.  
Triumph or die, there's Victor still to witness  
Who dies or triumphs—either way, alone!

*Pol.* Once I had found my share in triumph, Charles,  
Or death.

*Cha.* But you are I! But you I call  
To take, Heaven's proxy, vows I tendered Heaven  
A moment since. I will deserve the crown!

*Pol.* You will. [*Aside.*] No doubt it were a glorious  
thing

For any people, if a heart like his  
Ruled over it. I would I saw the trap!

*Enter VICTOR.*

'Tis he must show me.

*Vic.* So the mask falls off  
An old man's foolish love at last! Spare thanks—  
I know you, and Polyxena I know.  
Here's Charles—I am his guest now—does he bid me  
Be seated? And my light-haired, blue-eyed child  
Must not forget the old man far away  
At Chambery, who dozes while she reigns.

*Pol.* Most grateful shall we now be, talking least  
Of gratitude—indeed of anything  
That hinders what yourself must have to say  
To Charles.

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

*Cha.* Pray speak, Sire!

*Vic.* 'Faith, not much to say—

Only what shows itself, once in the point  
Of sight. You are now the King: you'll comprehend  
Much you may oft have wondered at—the shifts,  
Dissimulation, wiliness I showed.

For what's our post? Here's Savoy and here's  
Piedmont,

Here's Montferrat—a breadth here, a space there—  
To o'er-sweep all these, what's one weapon worth?

I often think of how they fought in Greece  
(Or Rome, which was it? You're the scholar, Charles!)

You made a front-thrust? But if your shield, too,  
Were not adroitly planted—some shrewd knave  
Reached you behind; and, him foiled, straight if thong  
And handle of that shield were not cast loose,  
And you enabled to outstrip the wind,  
Fresh foes assailed you, either side; 'scape these,  
And reach your place of refuge—e'en then, odds  
If the gate opened unless breath enough  
Was left in you to make its lord a speech.

Oh, you will see!

*Cha.* No: straight on shall I go,  
Truth helping; win with it or die with it.

*Vic.* 'Faith, Charles, you're not made Europe's  
fighting-man!

Its barrier-guarder, if you please. You hold,  
Not take—consolidate, with envious French  
This side, with Austrians that, these territories  
I held—ay, and will hold . . . which *you* shall hold  
Despite the couple! But I've surely earned  
Exemption from these weary politics,  
—The privilege to prattle with my son  
And daughter here, tho' Europe waits the while.

*Pol.* Nay, Sire,—at Chambéry, away for ever,  
As soon you'll be, 'tis a farewell we bid you!  
Turn these few fleeting moments to account!  
'Tis just as though it were a death.

*Vic.* Indeed!

*Pol.* [*Aside.*] Is the trap there?



## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

*Cha.* Ay, call this parting—death!  
The sacredder your memory becomes.  
If I misrule Sardinia, how bring back  
My father? No—that thought shall ever urge me.

*Vic.* I do not mean . . .

*Pol.* [*who watches VICTOR narrowly this while.*]

Your father does not mean  
That you are ruling for your father's sake:  
It is your people must concern you wholly  
Instead of him. You meant this, Sire? (He drops  
My hand!)

*Cha.* That People is now part of me.

*Vic.* About the People! I took certain measures  
Some short time since . . . Oh, I'm aware you know  
But little of my measures—these affect  
The nobles—we've resumed some grants, imposed  
A tax or two; prepare yourself, in short,  
For clamours on that score: mark me: you yield  
No jot of what's entrusted you!

*Pol.* . . . . . No jot  
You yield!

*Cha.* My father, when I took the oath,  
Although my eye might stray in search of yours,  
I heard it, understood it, promised God  
What you require. Till from this eminence  
He moves me, here I keep, nor shall concede  
The meanest of my rights.

*Vic.* [*Aside.*] The boy's a fool!  
—Or rather, I'm a fool: for, what's wrong here?  
To-day the sweets of reigning—let to-morrow  
Be ready with its bitters.

*Enter D'ORMEA.*

There's beside  
Somewhat to press upon your notice first.

*Cha.* Then why delay it for an instant, Sire?  
That Spanish claim, perchance? And, now you speak,  
—This morning, my opinion was mature—  
Which, boy-like, I was bashful in producing

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

To one, I ne'er am like to fear, in future!  
My thought is formed upon that Spanish claim.

*Vic.* (Betimes, indeed.) Not now, Charles. You  
require

A host of papers on it—

*D'O.* [*coming forward.*] Here they are.

{*To CHA.*} I was the minister and much beside—

Of the late monarch: to say little, him

I served! on you I have, to say e'en less,

No claim. This case contains those papers: with them  
I tender you my office.

*Vic.* [*hastily.*] Keep him, Charles!

There's reason for it—many reasons: you

Distrust him, nor are so far wrong there,—but

He's mixed up in the matter—he'll desire

To quit you, for occasions known to me:

Do not accept those reasons—have him stay!

*Pol.* [*Aside.*] His minister thrust on us!

*Cha.* [*to D'ORMEA.*] Sir, believe,

In justice to myself, you do not need

E'en this commending: whatsoe'er might be

My feelings toward you as a private man,

They quit me in the vast and untried field

Of action. Though I shall, myself, (as late

In your own hearing I engaged to do)

Preside o'er my Sardinia, yet your help

Is necessary. Think the past forgotten,

And serve me now!

*D'O.* I did not offer you

My services—would I could serve you, Sire!

As for the Spanish matter . . .

*Vic.* But despatch

At least the dead, in my good daughter's phrase,

Before the living! Help to house me safe

Ere you and D'Ormea set the world a-gape!

Here is a paper—will you overlook

What I propose reserving for my needs?

I get as far from you as possible.

There's what I reckon my expenditure.

*Cha.* [*reading.*] A miserable fifty thousand crowns!

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

*Vic.* Oh, quite enough for country gentlemen!  
Besides the exchequer happens . . . but find out  
All that, yourself!

*Cha.* [*still reading*]. "Count Tende"—what means  
this?

*Vic.* Me: you were but an infant when I burst  
Through the defile of Tende upon France.  
Had only my allies kept true to me!  
No matter. Tende's, then, a name I take  
Just as . . .

*D'O.* —The Marchioness Sebastian takes  
The name of Spigno.

*Cha.* How, sir?

*Vic.* [*to D'ORMEA*]. Fool! All that  
Was for my own detailing. [*To CHARLES*]. That  
anon!

*Cha.* [*to D'ORMEA*]. Explain what you have said,  
sir!

*D'O.* I supposed  
The marriage of the King to her I named,  
Profoundly kept a secret these few weeks,  
Was not to be one, now's he Count.

*Pol.* [*Aside*]. With us  
The minister—with him the mistress!

*Cha.* [*to VICTOR*]. No—  
Tell me you have not taken her—that woman  
To live with, past recall!

*Vic.* And where's the crime . . .

*Pol.* [*to CHARLES*]. True, sir, this is a matter past  
recall,

And past your cognizance, A day before,  
And you had been compelled to note this—now  
Why note it? The King saved his House from  
shame:

What the Count does, is no concern of yours.

*Cha.* [*after a pause*]. The Spanish business,  
D'Ormea!

*Vic.* Why, my son,  
I took some ill-advised . . . one's age, in fact,  
Spoils everything: though I was over-reached,

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

A younger brain, we'll trust, may extricate  
Sardinia readily. To-morrow, D'Ormea,  
Inform the King!

*D'O* [*without regarding VICTOR, and leisurely.*] Thus  
stands the case with Spain:

When first the Infant Carlos claimed his proper  
Succession to the throne of Tuscany . . .

*Vic.* I tell you, that stands over! Let that rest!  
There is the policy!

*Cha.* [*to D'ORMEA.*] Thus much I know,  
And more—too much: the remedy?

*D'O.* Of course!

No glimpse of one—

*Vic.* No remedy at all!

It makes the remedy itself—time makes it.

*D'O.* [*to CHARLES.*] But if . . .

*Vic.* [*still more hastily.*] In fine, I shall take care  
of that—

And, with another project that I have . . .

*D'O.* [*turning on him.*] Oh, since Count Tende  
means to take again

King Victor's crown!—

*Pol.* [*throwing herself at VICTOR'S feet.*] E'en now  
retake it, Sire!

Oh, speak! We are your subjects both, once more!

Say it—a word effects it! You meant not.

Nor do mean now, to take it—but you must!

'Tis in you—in your nature—and the shame's

Not half the shame 'twould grow to afterward!

*Cha.* Polyxena!

*Pol.* A word recalls the Knights—

Say it!—What's promising and what's the past?

Say you are still King Victor!

*D'O.* Better say

The Count repents in brief! [*VICTOR rises.*]

*Cha.* With such a crime

I have not charged you, Sire!

*Pol.* Charles turns from me!

# KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

SECOND YEAR 1731.—KING CHARLES.

## PART I.

*Enter QUEEN POLYXENA and D'ORMEA—A pause.*

*Pol.* And now, sir, what have you to say?

*D'O.* Count Tende . . .

*Pol.* Affirm not I betrayed you; you resolve  
On uttering this strange intelligence  
—Nay, post yourself to find me ere I reach  
The capital, because you know King Charles  
Tarries a day or two at Evian baths  
Behind me:—but take warning,—here and thus  
[*Seating herself in the royal seat.*

I listen, if I listen—not your friend.  
Explicitly the statement, if you still  
Persist to urge it on me, must proceed:  
I am not made for aught else.

*D'O.* Good! Count Tende . . .

*Pol.* I, who mistrust you, shall acquaint King  
Charles,

Who even more mistrusts you.

*D'O.* Does he so?

*Pol.* Why should he not?

*D'O.* Ay, why not? Motives, seek  
You virtuous people, motives! Say, I serve  
God at the devil's bidding—will that do?  
I'm proud: our People have been pacified  
(Really I know not how)—

*Pol.* By truthfulness.

*D'O.* Exactly; that shows I had nought to do  
With pacifying them: our foreign perils  
Also exceed my means to stay: but here  
'Tis otherwise, and my pride's piqued. Count Tende  
Completes a full year's absence: would you, madam,  
Have the old monarch back, his mistress back,

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

His measures back? I pray you, act upon  
My counsel, or they will be.

*Pol.*

When?

*D'O.*

Let's think.

Home matters settled—Victor's coming now;  
Let foreign matters settle—Victor's here:  
Unless I stop him; as I will, this way.

*Pol.* [*reading the papers he presents.*] If this should  
prove a plot 'twixt you and Victor?

You seek annoyances to give him pretext  
For what you say you fear!

*D'O.*

Oh, possibly!

I go for nothing. Only show King Charles  
That thus Count Tende purposes return,  
And style me his inviter, if you please.

*Pol.* Half of your tale is true; most like, the  
Count

Seeks to return: but why stay you with us?  
To aid in such emergencies.

*D'O.*

Keep safe

Those papers: or, to serve me, leave no proof  
I thus have counselled: when the Count returns,  
And the King abdicates, 'twill stead me little  
To have thus counselled.

*Pol.*

The King abdicate!

*D'O.* He's good, we knew long since—wise, we dis-  
cover—

Firm, let us hope:—but I'd have gone to work  
With him away. Well!

[*CHARLES without.*] In the Council Chamber?

*D'O.* All's lost!

*Pol.*

Oh, surely not King Charles! He's  
changed—

That's not this year's care-burthened voice and step:  
'Tis last year's step—the Prince's voice!

*D'O.*

I know!

*Enter CHARLES—D'ORMEA retiring a little.*

*Cha.* Now wish me joy, Polyxena! Wish it me

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

The old way !

*[She embraces him.]*

There was too much cause for that !

But I have found myself again ! What's news

At Turin ? Oh, if you but felt the load

I'm free of—free ! I said this year would end

Or it, or me—but I am free, thank God !

*Pol.* How, Charles ?

*Cha.* You do not guess ? The day I  
found

Sardinia's hideous coil, at home, abroad,

And how my father was involved in it,—

Of course, I vowed to rest or smile no more

Until I freed his name from obloquy.

We did the people right—'twas much to gain

That point, redress our nobles' grievance, too—

But that took place here, was no crying shame :

All must be done abroad,—if I abroad

Appeased the justly-angered Powers, destroyed

The scandal, took down Victor's name at last

From a bad eminence, I then might breathe

And rest ! No moment was to lose. Behold

The proud result—a Treaty, Austria, Spain

Agree to—

*D'O.* *[Aside.]* I shall merely stipulate

For an experienced headsman.

*Cha.* Not a soul

Is compromised : the blotted Past's a blank :

Even D'Ormea will escape unquestioned. See !

It reached me from Vienna ; I remained

At Evian to despatch the Count his news ;

'Tis gone to Chambery a week ago—

And here am I : do I deserve to feel

Your warm white arms around me ?

*D'O.* *[coming forward.]* He knows that ?

*Cha.* What, in Heaven's name, means this ?

*D'O.* He knows that matters

Are settled at Vienna ? Not too late !

Plainly, unless you post this very hour

Some man you trust (say, me) to Chambery,

And take precautions I'll acquaint you with,

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

Your father will return here.

*Cha.* Is he crazed  
This D'Ormea? Here? For what? As well return  
To take his crown!

*D'O.* He will return for that.

*Cha.* [to POLYXENA.] You have not listened to this  
man?

*Pol.* He spoke  
About your safety—and I listened.

[*He disengages himself from her arms.*]

*Cha.* [to D'ORMEA.] What  
Apprised you of the Count's intentions?

*D'O.* Me?  
His heart, Sire; you may not be used to read  
Such evidence, however; therefore read

[*Pointing to POLYXENA'S papers.*]

My evidence.

*Cha.* [to POLYXENA.] Oh, worthy this of you!  
And of your speech I never have forgotten,  
Tho' I professed forgetfulness; which haunts me  
As if I did not know how false it was;  
Which made me toil unconsciously thus long  
That there might be no least occasion left  
For aught of its prediction coming true!  
And now, when there is left no least occasion  
To instigate my father to such crime;  
When I might venture to forget (I hoped)  
That speech and recognise Polyxena—  
Oh, worthy, to revive, and tenfold worse,  
That plague now! D'Ormea at your ear, his slanders  
Still in your hand! Silent?

*Pol.* As the wronged are.

*Cha.* And, D'Ormea, pray, since when have you  
presumed  
To spy upon my father? (I conceive  
What that wise paper shows, and easily.)  
Since when?

*D'O.* The when, and where, and how, belong  
To me. 'Tis sad work, but I deal in such.  
You oftimes serve yourself—I'd serve you here:



## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

Use makes me not so squeamish. In a word,  
Since the first hour he went to Chambery,  
Of his seven servants, five have I suborned.

*Cha.* You hate my father?

*D'O.* Oh, just as you will!

[*Looking at POLYXENA.*]

A minute since, I loved him—hate him, now!  
What matters?—If you'll ponder just one thing:  
Has he that Treaty?—He is setting forward  
Already. Are your guards here?

*Cha.* Well for you

They are not! [*To POL.*] Him I knew of old, but  
you—

To hear that pickthank, further his designs! [*To D'O.*  
Guards?—were they here, I'd bid them, for your  
trouble,

Arrest you.

*D'O.* Guards you shall not want. I lived  
The servant of your choice, not of your need.

You never greatly needed me till now

That you discard me. This is my arrest.

Again I tender you my charge—its duty

Would bid me press you read these documents.

Here, Sire! [*Offering his badge of office.*]

*Cha.* [*taking it.*] The papers also! Do you think  
I dare not read them?

*Pol.* Read them, sir!

*Cha.* They prove,  
My father, still a month within the year

Since he so solemnly consigned it me,

Means to resume his crown? They shall prove that,

Or my best dungeon . . .

*D'O.* Even say, Chambery!

'Tis vacant, I surmise, by this.

*Cha.* You prove

Your words or pay their forfeit, sir. Go there!

Polyxena, one chance to rend the veil

Thickening and blackening 'twixt us two! Do say,

You'll see the falsehood of the charges proved!

Do say, at least, you wish to see them proved

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

False charges—my heart's love of other times!

*Pol.* Ah, Charles!

*Cha.* [to D'ORMEA.] Precede me, sir!

*D'O.* And I'm at length

A martyr for the truth! No end, they say,  
Of miracles. My conscious innocence!

[As they go out, enter—by the middle door—at  
which he pauses—VICTOR.]

*Vic.* Sure I heard voices? No! Well, I do best  
To make at once for this, the heart o' the place,  
The old room! Nothing changed!—So near my seat,  
D'Ormea? [*Pushing away the stool which is by the*  
*KING's chair.*]

I want that meeting over first,  
I know not why. Tush, D'Ormea won't be slow  
To hearten me, the supple knave! That burst  
Of spite so eased him! He'll inform me . . .

What?

Why come I hither? All's in rough—let all  
Remain rough; there's full time to draw back—nay,  
There's nought to draw back from, as yet; whereas,  
If reason should be, to arrest a course  
Of error—reason good, to interpose  
And save, as I have saved so many times,  
Our House, admonish my son's giddy youth,  
Relieve him of a weight that proves too much—  
Now is the time,—or now, or never. 'Faith,  
This kind of step is pitiful—not due  
To Charles, this stealing back—hither, because  
He's from his Capital! Oh, Victor! Victor!  
But thus it is: the age of crafty men  
Is loathsome; youth contrives to carry off  
Dissimulation; we may intersperse  
Extenuating passages of strength,  
Ardour, vivacity, and wit—may turn  
E'en guile into a voluntary grace,—  
But one's old age, when graces drop away  
And leave guile the pure staple of our lives—  
Ah, loathsome!

Not so—or why pause I? Turin

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

Is mine to have, were I so minded, for  
The asking; all the Army's mine—I've witnessed  
Each private fight beneath me; all the Court's  
Mine too; and, best of all, my D'Ormea's still  
His D'Ormea; no! There's some grace clinging yet.  
Had I decided on this step, ere midnight  
I'd take the crown.

No! Just this step to rise  
Exhausts me! Here am I arrived: the rest  
Must be done for me. Would I could sit here  
And let things right themselves, the masque unmasque  
—Of the King, crownless, grey hairs and hot blood,—  
The young King, crowned, but calm before his time,  
They say,—the eager woman with her taunts,—  
And the sad earnest wife who motions me  
Away—ay, there she knelt to me! E'en yet  
I can return and sleep at Chambery  
A dream out. Rather shake it off at Turin,  
King Victor! Is't to Turin—yes, or no?  
'Tis this relentness noonday-lighted chamber,  
Lighted like life, but silent as the grave,  
That disconcerts me! There must be the change—  
No silence last year: some one flung doors wide  
(Those two great doors which scrutinise me now)  
And out I went 'mid crowds of men—men talking,  
Men watching if my lip fell or brow changed;  
Men saw me safe forth—put me on my road:  
That makes the misery of this return!  
Oh, had a battle done it! Had I dropped  
—Haling some battle, three entire days old,  
Hither and thither by the forehead—dropped  
In Spain, in Austria, best of all, in France—  
Spurned on its horns or underneath its hooves,  
When the spent monster goes upon its knees  
To pad and pash the prostrate wretch—I, Victor,  
Sole to have stood up against France—beat down  
By inches, brayed to pieces finally  
By some vast unimaginable charge,  
A flying hell of horse and foot and guns  
Over me, and all's lost, for ever lost,

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

There's no more Victor when the world wakes up!  
Then silence, as of a raw battle-field,  
Throughout the world. Then after (as whole days  
After, you catch at intervals faint noise  
Thro' the stiff crust of frozen blood)—there creeps  
A rumour forth, so faint, no noise at all,  
That a strange old man, with face outworn for wounds,  
Is stumbling on from frontier town to town,  
Begging a pittance that may help him find  
His Turin out; what scorn and laughter follow  
The coin you fling into his cap: and last,  
Some bright morn, how men crowd about the midst  
Of the market-place, where takes the old king breath  
Ere with his crutch he strike the palace-gate  
Wide ope!

To Turin, yes or no—or no?

*Re-enter CHARLES with papers.*

*Cha.* Just as I thought! A miserable falsehood  
Of hirelings discontented with their pay  
And longing for enfranchisement! A few  
Testy expressions of old age that thinks  
To keep alive its dignity o'er slaves  
By means that suit their natures!

[*Tearing them.*] Thus they shake  
My faith in Victor!

[*Turning, he discovers VICTOR.*

*Vic.* [*after a pause.*] Not at Evian, Charles?  
What's this? Why do you run to close the doors?  
No welcome for your father?

*Cha.* [*Aside.*] Not his voice!  
What would I give for one imperious tone  
Of the old sort! That's gone for ever.

*Vic.* Must  
I ask once more . . .

*Cha.* No—I concede it, sir!  
You are returned for . . . true, your health declined—  
True, Chambery's a bleak unkindly spot;  
You'd choose one fitter for your final lodge—

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

Veneria—or Moncagliar—ay, that's close,  
And I concede it.

*Vic.* I received advices  
Of the conclusion of the Spanish matter  
Dated from Evian baths . . .

*Cha.* And you forbore  
To visit me at Evian, satisfied  
The work I had to do would fully task  
The little wit I have, and that your presence  
Would only disconcert me—

*Vic.* Charles?

*Cha.* —Me—set  
For ever in a foreign course to yours,  
And . . .

Sir, this way of wile were good to catch,  
But I have not the sleight of it. The truth!  
Though I sink under it! What brings you here?

*Vic.* Not hope of this reception, certainly.  
From one who'd scarce assume a stranger mode  
Of speech, did I return to bring about  
Some awfulest calamity!

*Cha.* —You mean,  
Did you require your crown again! Oh yes,  
I should not speak otherwise! But turn not that  
To jesting! Sir, the truth! Your health declines?  
Is aught deficient in our equipage?  
Wisely you seek myself to make complaint,  
And foil the malice of the world which laughs  
At petty discontents; but I shall care  
That not a soul knows of this visit. Speak!

*Vic.* [*Aside.*] Here is the grateful, much-professing son  
Who was to worship me, and for whose sake  
I think to waive my plans of public good!  
[*Aloud.*] Nay, Charles, if I did seek to take once more  
My crown, were so disposed to plague myself—  
What would be warrant for this bitterness?  
I gave it—grant, I would resume it—well?

*Cha.* I should say simply—leaving out the why  
And how—you made me swear to keep that crown:  
And as you then intended . . .

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

*Vic.* Fool! What way  
Could I intend or not intend? As man,  
With a man's life, when I say "I intend,"  
I can intend up to a certain point,  
No further. I intended to preserve  
The Crown of Savoy and Sardinia whole:  
And if events arise demonstrating  
The way I took to keep it, rather's like  
To lose it . . .

*Cha.* Keep within your sphere and mine!  
It is God's province we usurp on, else.  
Here, blindfold thro' the maze of things we walk  
By a slight thread of false, true, right and wrong;  
All else is rambling and presumption. I  
Have sworn to keep this kingdom: there's my truth.

*Vic.* Truth, boy, is here—within my breast; and in  
Your recognition of it, truth is, too:  
And in the effect of all this tortuous dealing  
With falsehood, used to carry out the truth,  
—In its success, this falsehood turns, again,  
Truth for the world! But you are right: these themes  
Are over-subtle. I should rather say  
In such a case, frankly,—it fails, my scheme:  
I hoped to see you bring about, yourself,  
What I must bring about: I interpose  
On your behalf—with my son's good in sight—  
To hold what he is nearly letting go—  
Confirm his title—add a grace, perhaps—  
There's Sicily, for instance,—granted me  
And taken back, some years since—till I give  
That island with the rest, my work's half done.  
For his sake, therefore, as of those he rules . . .

*Cha.* Our sakes are one—and that, you could not say,  
Because my answer would present itself  
Forthwith;—a year has wrought an age's change:  
This people's not the people now, you once  
Could benefit; nor is my policy  
Your policy.

*Vic.* [*with an outburst.*] I know it! You undo  
All I have done—my life of toil and care!

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

I left you this the absolutest rule  
In Europe—do you think I will sit still  
And see you throw all power off to the people—  
See my Sardinia, that has stood apart,  
Join in the mad and democratic whirl,  
Whereto I see all Europe haste full-tide?  
England casts off her kings—France mimics England—  
This realm I hoped was safe! Yet here I talk,  
When I can save it, not by force alone,  
But bidding plagues, which follow sons like you,  
Fasten upon my disobedient . . .

[*Recollecting himself.*] Surely

I could say this—if minded so—my son?

*Cha.* You could not! Bitterer curses than your curse  
Have I long since denounced upon myself  
If I misused my power. In fear of these  
I entered on those measures—will abide  
By them; so, I should say, Count Tende . . .

*Vic.*

No!

But no! But if, my Charles, your—more than old—  
Half-foolish father urged these arguments,  
And then confessed them futile, but said plainly  
That he forgot his promise, found his strength  
Fail him, had thought at savage Chambery  
Too much of brilliant Turin, Rivoli here,  
And Susa, and Veneria, and Superga—  
Pined for the pleasant places he had built  
When he was fortunate and young—

*Cha.*

My father!

*Vic.* Stay yet—and if he said he could not die  
Deprived of baubles he had put aside,  
He deemed, for ever—of the Crown that binds  
Your brain up, whole, sound, and impregnable,  
Creating kingliness—the Sceptre, too,  
Whose mere wind, should you wave it, back would beat  
Invaders—and the golden Ball which throbs  
As if you grasped the palpitating heart  
Indeed o' the realm, to mould as you may choose!  
—If I must totter up and down the streets  
My sires built, where myself have introduced

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

And fostered laws and letters, sciences,  
The civil and the military arts—  
Stay, Charles—I see you letting me pretend  
To live my former self once more—King Victor,  
The venturous yet politic—they style me  
Again, the Father of the Prince—friends wink  
Good-humouredly at the delusion you  
So sedulously guard from all rough truths  
That else would break upon the dotage!—You—  
Whom now I see preventing my old shame—  
I tell not, point by cruel point, my tale—  
For is't not in your breast my brow is hid?  
Is not your hand extended? Say you not . . .

*Enter D'ORMEA, leading in POLYXENA.*

*Pol. [advancing and withdrawing CHARLES—to VICTOR.]*

In this conjuncture, even, he would say—  
(Tho' with a moistened eye and quivering lip)  
The suppliant is my father—I must save  
A great man from himself, nor see him fling  
His well-earned fame away: there must not follow  
Ruin so utter, a break-down of worth  
So absolute: no enemy shall learn,  
He thrust his child 'twixt danger and himself,  
And, when that child somehow stood danger out,  
Stole back with serpent wiles to ruin Charles  
—Body, that's much,—and soul, that's more—and realm  
That's most of all! No enemy shall say . . .

*D'O.* Do you repent, sir?

*Vic. [resuming himself.]* D'Ormea? This is well!  
Worthily done, King Charles, craftily done!  
Judiciously you post these, to o'erhear  
The little your importunate father thrusts  
Himself on you to say! Ay, they'll correct  
The amiable blind facility  
You showed in answering his peevish suit:  
What can he need to sue for? Bravely, D'Ormea.  
Have you fulfilled your office: but for you,



## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

The old Count might have drawn some few more livres  
To swell his income! Had you, Lady, missed  
The moment, a permission had been granted  
To build afresh my ruinous old pile—  
But you remembered properly the list  
Of wise precautions I took when I gave  
Nearly as much away—to reap the fruits  
I should have looked for!

*Cha.* Thanks, sir: degrade me,  
So you remain yourself. Adieu!

*Vic.* I'll not  
Forget it for the future, nor presume  
Next time to slight such potent mediators!  
Had I first moved them both to intercede,  
I might have had a chamber in Moncaglièr  
—Who knows?

*Cha.* Adieu!

*Vic.* You bid me this adieu  
With the old spirit?

*Cha.* Adieu!

*Vic.* Charles—Charles—

*Cha.* Adieu!

[VICTOR goes.]

*Cha.* You were mistaken, Marquis, as you hear!  
'Twas for another purpose the Count came.  
The Count desires Moncaglièr. Give the order!  
*D'O.* [*leisurely.*] Your minister has lost your con-  
fidence,

Asserting late, for his own purposes,  
Count Tende would . . .

*Cha.* [*flinging his badge back.*] Be still our minister!  
And give a loose to your insulting joy—  
It irks me more thus stifled than expressed.  
Loose it!

*D'O.* There's none to loose, alas!—I see  
I never am to die a martyr!

*Pol.* Charles!

*Cha.* No praise, at least, Polyxena—no praise!

# KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

## KING CHARLES : PART II.

Night.—D'ORMEA *seated, folding papers he has been examining.*

This at the last effects it: now, King Charles  
Or else King Victor—that's a balance: now  
For D'Ormea the arch-culprit, either turn  
O' the scale,—that's sure enough. A point to solve,  
My masters—moralists—whate'er's your style!  
When you discover why I push myself  
Into a pitfall you'd pass safely by,  
Impart to me among the rest! No matter.  
Prompt are the righteous ever with their rede  
To us the wicked—lesson them this once!  
For safe among the wicked are you set,  
Old D'Ormea. We lament life's brevity,  
Yet quarter e'en the threescore years and ten,  
Nor stick to call the quarter roundly "life."  
D'Ormea was wicked, say, some twenty years;  
A tree so long was stunted; afterward  
What if it grew, continued growing, till  
No fellow of the forest equalled it?  
'Twas a shrub then—a shrub it still must be:  
While forward saplings, at the outset checked,  
In virtue of that first sprout keep their style  
Amid the forest's green fraternity.  
Thus I shoot up—to surely get lopped down,  
And bound up for the burning. Now for it!

*Enter CHARLES and POLYXENA with Attendants.*

D'O. [*rises.*] Sire, in the due discharge of this my  
office—

This enforced summons of yourself from Turin,  
And the disclosure I am bound to make  
To-night,—there must already be, I feel,  
So much that wounds . . .

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

*Cha.* Well, sir?

*D'O.* —That I, perchance,

May utter, also, what, another time,  
Would irk much,—it may prove less irksome now.

*Cha.* What would you utter?

*D'O.* That I from my soul

Grieve at to-night's event: for you I grieve—

E'en grieve for . . .

*Cha.* Tush, another time for talk!

My kingdom is in imminent danger?

*D'O.* Let

The Count communicate with France—its King,

His grandson, will have Fleury's aid for this,

Though for no other war.

*Cha.* First for the levies:

What forces can I muster presently?

[*D'ORMEA delivers papers which CHARLES inspects.*

*Cha.* Good—very good. Montorio . . how is this?

—Equips me double the old complement

Of soldiers?

*D'O.* Since his land has been relieved

From double impost, this he manages:

But under the late monarch . .

*Cha.* Peace. I know.

Count Spava has omitted mentioning

What proxy is to head these troops of his.

*D'O.* Count Spava means to head his troops himself.

Something's to fight for now; "whereas," says he,

"Under the Sovereign's father" . . .

*Cha.* It would seem

That all my people love me.

*D'O.* Yes.

[*To POLYXENA while CHARLES continues to inspect the papers.*

A temper

Like Victor's may avail to keep a state;

He terrifies men and they fall not off;

Good to restrain; best, if restraint were all:

But with the silent circle round him, ends

Such sway. Our King's begins precisely there.

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

For to suggest, impel, and set at work,  
Is quite another function. Men may slight,  
In time of peace, the King who brought them peace:  
In war,—his voice, his eyes, help more than fear.  
They love you, Sire!

*Cha.* [to Attendants.] Bring the Regalia forth.  
Quit the room. And now, Marquis, answer me—  
Why should the King of France invade my realm?

*D'O.* Why? Did I not acquaint your Majesty  
An hour ago?

*Cha.* I choose to hear again  
What then I heard.

*D'O.* Because, Sire, as I said,  
Your father is resolved to have the crown  
At any risk; and, as I judge, calls in  
These foreigners to aid him.

*Cha.* And your reason  
For saying this?

*D'O.* [Aside.] Ay, just his father's way!  
[To CH.] The Count wrote yesterday to your Forces'  
Chief,

Rhebinder,—made demand of help—

*Cha.* To try  
Rhebinder—he's of alien blood: aught else?

*D'O.* Receiving a refusal,—some hours after,  
The Count called on Del Borga to deliver  
The Act of Abdication: he refusing,  
Or hesitating, rather—

*Cha.* What ensued?

*D'O.* At midnight, only two hours since, at Turin,  
He rode in person to the citadel  
With one attendant to the Soccorso gate,  
And bade the governor, San Remi, open—  
Admit him.

*Cha.* For a purpose I divine,  
These three were faithful, then?

*D'O.* They told it me:  
And I—

*Cha.* Most faithful—

*D'O.* Tell it you—with this,

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

Moreover, of my own: if, an hour hence,  
You have not interposed, the Count will be  
Upon his road to France for succour.

*Cha.* Good!  
You do your duty, now, to me your monarch  
Fully, I warrant?—have, that is, your project  
For saving both of us disgrace, past doubt?

*D'O.* I have my counsel,—and the only one.  
A month since, I besought you to employ  
Restraints which had prevented many a pang:  
But now the harsher course must be pursued.  
These papers, made for the emergency,  
Will pain you to subscribe: this is a list  
Of those suspected merely—men to watch;  
This—of the few of the Count's very household.  
You must, however reluctantly, arrest;  
While here's a method of remonstrance (sure  
Not stronger than the case demands) to take  
With the Count's self.

*Cha.* Deliver those three papers.

*Pol.* [*while CHARLES inspects them—to D'ORMEA.*]  
Your measures are not over-harsh, sir: France  
Will hardly be deterred from coming hither  
By these.

*D'O.* What good of my proposing measures  
Without a chance of their success? E'en these,  
Hear what he'll say at my presenting.

*Cha.* [*who has signed them.*] There!  
About the warrants! You've my signature.  
What turns you pale? I do my duty by you  
In acting boldly thus on your advice.

*D'O.* [*reading them separately.*] Arrest the people I  
suspected merely?

*Cha.* Did you suspect them?

*D'O.* Doubtless: but—but—Sire,  
This Forquieri's governor of Turin;  
And Rivarol and he have influence over  
Half of the capital.—Rabella, too?  
Why, Sire—

*Cha.* Oh, leave the fear to me.

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

*D'O.* [*still reading.*] You bid me  
Incarcerate the people on this list?  
Sire—

*Cha.* Why, you never bade arrest those men,  
So close related to my father too,  
On trifling grounds?

*D'O.* Oh, as for that, St. George,  
President of Chambery's senators,  
Is hatching treason—but—

[*Still more troubled.*] Sire, Count Cumiane  
Is brother to your father's wife! What's here?  
Arrest the wife herself?

*Cha.* You seem to think it  
A venial crime to plot against me. Well?

*D'O.* [*who has read the last paper.*] Wherefore am I  
thus ruined? Why not take

My life at once? This poor formality  
Is, let me say, unworthy you! Prevent it,  
You, madam! I have served you, am prepared  
For all disgraces—only, let disgrace  
Be plain, be proper—proper for the world  
To pass its judgment on 'twixt you and me!  
Take back your warrant—I will none of it.

*Cha.* Here is a man to talk of fickleness!  
He stakes his life upon my father's falsehood;  
I bid him—

*D'O.* Not you! Were he trebly false  
You do not bid me—

*Cha.* Is't not written there?  
I thought so: give—I'll set it right.

*D'O.* Is it there?  
Oh, yes—and plain—arrest him—now—drag here  
Your father! And were all six times as plain,  
Do you suppose I'd trust it?

*Cha.* Just one word!  
You bring him, taken in the act of flight,  
Or else your life is forfeit.

*D'O.* Ay, to Turin  
I bring him? And to-morrow?

*Cha.* Here and now!

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

The whole thing is a lie—a hateful lie—  
As I believed and as my father said.  
I knew it from the first, but was compelled  
To circumvent you; and the crafty D'Ormea,  
That baffled Alberoni and tricked Coscia,  
The miserable sower of such discord  
'Twixt sire and son, is in the toils at last!  
Oh, I see! you arrive—this plan of yours,  
Weak as it is, torments sufficiently  
A sick, old, peevish man—wings hasty speech  
And ill-considered threats from him; that's noted;  
Then out you ferret papers, his amusement  
In lonely hours of lassitude—examine  
The day-by-day report of your paid creatures—  
And back you come—all was not ripe, you find,  
And, as you hope, may keep from ripening yet—  
But you were in bare time! Only, 'twere best  
I never saw my father—these old men  
Are potent in excuses—and, meantime,  
D'Ormea's the man I cannot do without.

*Pol.* Charles—

*Cha.* Ah, no question! You're for D'Ormea too!  
You'd have me eat and drink, and sleep, live, die  
With this lie coil'd about me, choking me!  
No, no—he's caught! [*to D'ORMEA.*] You venture life,  
you say,

Upon my father's perfidy; and I  
Have, on the whole, no right to disregard  
The chains of testimony you thus wind  
About me; though I do—do from my soul  
Discredit them: still I must authorise  
These measures—and I will. Perugia!

[*Many Officers enter.*]

Count—

You and Solar, with all the force you have,  
Are at the Marquis' orders: what he bids,  
Implicitly perform! You are to bring  
A traitor here; the man that's likest one  
At present, fronts me; you are at his beck  
For a full hour; he undertakes to show you  
A fouler than himself,—but, failing that,

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

Return with him, and, as my father lives,  
He dies this night! The clemency you've blamed  
So oft, shall be revoked—rights exercised  
That I've abjured.

[*To D'ORMEA.*] Now, Sir, about the work!  
To save your king and country! Take the warrant!

D'O. [*boldly to PERUGIA.*] You hear the Sovereign's  
mandate. Count Perugia?

Obeys me! As your diligence, expect  
Reward! All follow to Montcagliar!

Cha. [*in great anguish.*] D'Ormea! [*D'ORMEA goes.*]  
He goes, lit up with that appalling smile!

[*To POLYXENA after a pause.*]  
At least you understand all this?

Pol. These means  
Of our defence—these measures of precaution?

Cha. It must be the best way. I should have else  
Withered beneath his scorn.

Pol. What would you say?

Cha. Why, you don't think I mean to keep the  
crown,

Polyxena?

Pol. You then believe the story  
In spite of all—That Victor's coming?

Cha. Believe it?

I know that he is coming—feel the strength  
That has upheld me leave me at his coming!  
'Twas mine, and now he takes his own again.  
Some kinds of strength are well enough to have;  
But who's to have that strength? Let my crown go!  
I meant to keep it—but I cannot—cannot!  
Only, he shall not taunt me—he, the first—  
See if he would not be the first to taunt me  
With having left his kingdom at a word—  
With letting it be conquered without stroke—  
With . . . no—no—'tis no worse than when he left it,  
I've just to bid him take it, and, that over,  
We'll fly away—fly—for I loathe this Turin,  
This Rivoli, all titles loathe, and state.  
We'd best go to your country—unless God



## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

Send I die now!

*Pol.* Charles, hear me!

*Cha.* —And again

Shall you be my Polyxena—you'll take me  
Out of this woe! Yes, do speak—and keep speaking!  
I would not let you speak just now, for fear  
You'd counsel me against him: but talk, now,  
As we two used to talk in blessed times:  
Bid me endure all his caprices; take me  
From this mad post above him!

*Pol.* I believe

We are undone, but from a different cause.  
All your resources, down to the least guard,  
Are now at D'Ormea's beck. What if, this while,  
He acts in concert with your father? We  
Indeed were lost. This lonely Rivoli—  
Where find a better place for them?

*Cha.* [*pacing the room.*] And why

Does Victor come? To undo all that's done!  
Restore the past—prevent the future! Seat  
His mistress in your seat, and place in mine  
. . . Oh, my own people, whom will you find there,  
To ask of, to consult with, to care for,  
To hold up with your hands? Whom? One that's  
false—

False—from the head's crown to the foot's sole, false!  
The best is, that I knew it in my heart  
From the beginning, and expected this,  
And hated you, Polyxena, because  
You saw thro' him, though I too saw thro' him,  
Saw that he meant this while he crowned me, while  
He prayed for me,—nay, while he kissed my brow,  
I saw—

*Pol.* But if your measures take effect,  
And D'Ormea's true to you?

*Cha.* Then worst of all!

I shall have loosed that callous wretch on him!  
Well may the woman taunt him with his child—  
I, eating here his bread, clothed in his clothes,  
Seated upon his seat, give D'Ormea leave

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

To outrage him! We talk—perchance they tear  
My father from his bed—the old hands feel  
For one who is not, but who should be there—  
And he finds D'Ormea! D'Ormea, too, finds him!  
—The crowded chamber when the lights go out—  
Closed doors—the horrid scuffle in the dark—  
The accursed promptings of the minute! My guards!  
To horse—and after, with me—and prevent!

*Pol.* [seizing his hand.] King Charles! Pause here  
upon this strip of time

Allotted you out of eternity!

Crowns are from God—in his name you hold yours.

Your life's no least thing, were it fit your life

Should be abjured along with rule; but now,

Keep both! Your duty is to live and rule—

You, who would vulgarly look fine enough

In the world's eye, deserting your soul's charge,—

Ay, you would have men's praise—this Rivoli

Would be illumined: while, as 'tis, no doubt,

Something of stain will ever rest on you;

No one will rightly know why you refused

To abdicate; they'll talk of deeds you could

Have done, no doubt,—nor do I much expect

Future achievements will blot out the past,

Envelop it in haze—nor shall we two

Be happy any more; 'twill be, I feel,

Only in moments that the duty's seen

As palpably as now—the months, the years

Of painful indistinctness are to come,

While daily must we tread these palace rooms

Pregnant with memories of the past: your eye

May turn to mine and find no comfort there,

Through fancies that beset me, as yourself,

Of other courses, with far other issues,

We might have taken this great night—such bear,

As I will bear! What matters happiness?

Duty! There's man's one moment—this is yours!

[Putting the crown on his head, and the sceptre in  
his hand, she places him on his seat: a long  
pause and silence.]

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

*Enter D'ORMEA and VICTOR.*

*Vic.* At last I speak; but once—that once, to you!  
'Tis you I ask, not these your varletry,  
Who's King of us?

*Cha.* [*from his seat.*] Count Tende . . .

*Vic.* What your spies

Assert I ponder in my soul, I say—  
Here to your face, amid your guards! I choose  
To take again the crown whose shadow I gave—  
For still its potency surrounds the weak  
White locks their felon hands have discomposed,  
Or, I'll not ask who's King, but simply, who  
Withholds the crown I claim? Deliver it!  
I have no friend in the wide world; nor France  
Nor England cares for me: you see the sum  
Of what I can avail. Deliver it!

*Cha.* Take it, my father!

And now say in turn,

Was it done well, my father—sure not well,  
To try me thus! I might have seen much cause  
For keeping it—too easily seen cause!  
But, from that moment, e'en more woefully  
My life had pined away, than pine it will.  
Already you have much to answer for.  
My life to pine is nothing,—her sunk eyes  
Were happy once! No doubt, my people think  
That I'm their King still . . . but I cannot strive!  
Take it!

*Vic.* [*one hand on the crown CHARLES offers, the  
other on his neck.*] So few years give it quietly,  
My son! It will drop from me. See you not?  
A crown's unlike a sword to give away—  
That, let a strong hand to a weak hand give!  
But crowns should slip from palsied brows to heads  
Young as this head—yet mine is weak enough,  
E'en weaker than I knew. I seek for phrases  
To vindicate my right. 'Tis of a piece!  
All is alike gone by with me—who beat  
Once D'Orleans in his lines—his very lines!

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

To have been Eugene's comrade, Louis' rival,  
And now . . .

*Cha.* [*putting the crown on him, to the rest.*] The  
King speaks, yet none kneels, I think!

*Vic.* I am then King! As I became a King  
Despite the nations—kept myself a King—  
So I die King, with Kingship dying too  
Around me! I have lasted Europe's time!  
What wants my story of completion? Where  
Must needs the damning break show! Who mistrusts  
My children here—tell they of any break  
'Twixt my day's sunrise and its fiery fall?  
And who were by me when I died but they?  
Who?—D'Ormea there!

*Cha.* What means he?

*Vic.* Ever there!  
Charles—how to save your story? Mine must go!  
Say—say that you refused the crown to me—  
Charles, yours shall be my story! You immured  
Me, say, at Rivoli. A single year  
I spend without a sight of you, then die—  
That will serve every purpose—tell that tale  
The world!

*Cha.* Mistrust me? Help!

*Vic.* Past help, past reach!  
'Tis in the heart—you cannot reach the heart:  
This broke mine, that I did believe, you, Charles,  
Would have denied and so disgraced me.

*Pol.* Charles  
Has never ceased to be your subject, Sire!  
He reigned at first through setting up yourself  
As pattern: if he e'er seemed harsh to you,  
'Twas from a too intense appreciation  
Of your own character: he acted you—  
Ne'er for an instant did I think it real,  
Or look for any other than this end.  
I hold him worlds the worse on that account;  
But so it was.

*Cha.* [*to POLYX.*] I love you, now, indeed!  
[*To VICTOR.*] You never knew me!

## KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

*Vic.*

Hardly till this moment,

When I seem learning many other things,  
Because the time for using them is past.  
If 'twere to do again! That's idly wished.  
Truthfulness might prove policy as good  
As guile. Is this my daughter's forehead? Yes—  
I've made it fitter now to be a Queen's  
Than formerly—I've ploughed the deep lines there  
Which keep too well a crown from slipping off!  
No matter. Guile has made me King again.  
*Louis—'twas in King Victor's time—long since,*  
*When Louis reign'd—and, also, Victor reign'd—*  
How the world talks already of us two!  
God of eclipse and each discolour'd star,  
Why do I linger then?

Ha! Where lurks he?

D'Ormea! Come nearer to your King! Now stand!

*[Collecting his strength as D'ORMEA approaches.]*

But you lied, D'Ormea! I do not repent.

*[Dies.]*



THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES  
A TRAGEDY

## PERSONS.

The Grand-Master's Prefect.  
 The Patriarch's Nuncio.  
 The Republic's Admiral.  
 LOYS DE DREUX. Knight-  
 Novice.

Initiated Druses—DJABAL.

“ “ —KHALIL.

“ “ —ANAEL.

Initiated Druses—MAANL.

“ “ —KARSHOOK,  
 RAGHIB, AYOOB,  
 and others.

Uninitiated Druses.

Prefect's Guard, Nuncio's At-  
 tendants, Admirals  
 Force.



# THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

TIME, 14—.

PLACE. An Islet of the Southern Sporades, colonised by Druses of Lebanon, and garrisoned by the Knights-Hospitallers of Rhodes.

SCENE. A Hall in the Prefect's Palace.

## ACT I.

*Enter stealthily KARSHOOK, RAGHIB, AYOOB, and other initiated Druses, each as he enters casting off a robe that conceals his distinctive black vest and white turban; then, as giving a loose to exultation,—*

*Kar.* The moon is carried off in purple fire :  
Day breaks at last ! Break glory, with the day,  
On Djabal's dread incarnate mystery  
Now ready to resume its pristine shape  
Of Hakeem, as the Khalif vanished erst  
In what seemed death to uninstructed eyes,  
On red Mokattam's verge—our Founder's flesh,  
As he resumes our Founder's function !

*Ragh.* —Death  
Sweep to the Christian Prefect that enslaved  
So long us sad Druse exiles o'er the sea !

*Ay.* —Most joy be thine, O Mother-mount ! Thy  
brood

Returns to thee, no outcasts as we left,

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

But thus—but thus! Behind, our Prefect's corse;  
Before, a presence like the morning—thine,  
Absolute Djabal late,—God Hakeem now  
That day breaks!

*Kar.* Off then, with disguise at last!  
As from our forms this hateful garb we strip,  
Lose every tongue its glozing accent too,  
Discard each limb the ignoble gesture! Cry,  
'Tis the Druse Nation, warders on our mount  
Of the world's secret, since the birth of time,  
—No kindred slips, no offsets from thy stock,  
No spawn of Christians are we, Prefect, we  
Who rise . . .

*Ay.* Who shout . . .

*Ragh.* Who seize, a first-fruits, ha—  
Spoil of the spoiler! Brave!

*[They begin to tear down, and to dispute for, the  
decorations of the Hall.]*

*Kar.* Hold!

*Ay.* —Mine, I say;

And mine shall it continue!

*Kar.* Just this fringe!  
Take anything beside! Lo, spire on spire,  
Curl serpentwise wreathed columns to the top  
Of the roof, and hide themselves mysteriously  
Among the twinkling lights and darks that haunt  
Yon cornice! Where the huge veil, they suspend  
Before the Prefect's Chamber of delight,  
Floats wide, then falls again (as if its slave,  
The scented air, took heart now, and anon  
Lost heart, to buoy its breadths of gorgeousness  
Above the gloom they droop in)—all the porch  
Is jewelled o'er with frost-work characterly;  
And see yon eight-point cross of white flame, winking  
Hoar-silvery like some fresh-broke marble-stone:  
Raze out the Rhodian's Cross there, so thou leav'st

me

This single fringe!

*Ay.* Ha, wouldst thou, dog-fox? Help!  
—Three hand breadths of gold fringe, my son was set

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

To twist, the night he died!

*Kar.* Nay, hear the knave!

And I could witness my one daughter borne,  
A week since, to the Prefect's couch, yet fold  
These arms, be mute, lest word of mine should mar  
Our Master's work, delay the Prefect here  
A day, prevent his sailing hence for Rhodes—  
How know I else?—Hear me denied my right  
By such a knave!

*Ragh.* [*interposing.*] Each ravage for himself!  
 Booty enough! On, Druses! Be there found  
 Blood and a heap behind us: with us, Djabal  
 Turned Hakeem; and before us, Lebanon!  
 Yields the porch? Spare not! There his minions  
                   dragged

Thy daughter, Karshook, to the Prefect's couch!  
Ayoob! Thy son, to soothe the Prefect's pride,  
Bent o'er that task, the death-sweat on his brow,  
Carving the spice-tree's heart in scroll-work there!  
Onward in Djabal's name!

*As the tumult is at height, enter KHALIL. A pause and silence.*

*Kha.* Was it for this,  
Djabal hath summoned you? Deserve you thus  
A portion in to-day's event? What, here—  
When most behoves your feet fall soft, your eyes  
Sink low, your tongues lie still,—at Djabal's side,  
Close in his very hearing, who, perchance,  
Assumes e'en now God Hakeem's dreaded shape,—  
Dispute you for these gauds?

*Ay.* How say'st thou, Khalil?  
Doubtless our Master prompts thee! Take the fringe,  
Old Karshook! I supposed it was a day . . .

*Kha.* For pillage?

*Kar.* Hearken, Khalil! Never spoke  
A boy so like a song-bird; we avouch thee  
Prettiest of all our Master's instruments  
Except thy bright twin-sister—thou and Anael

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

Challenge his prime regard: but we may crave  
(Such nothings as we be) a portion too  
Of Djabal's favor; in him we believed,  
His bound ourselves, him moon by moon obeyed,  
Kept silence till this daybreak—so may claim  
Reward: who grudges me my claim?

*Ay.*

To-day

Is not as yesterday!

*Ragh.*

Stand off!

*Kha.*

Rebel you?

Must I, the delegate of Djabal, draw  
His wrath on you, the day of our Return?

*Other Druses.* Wrench from their grasp the fringe!

Hound! must the earth

Vomit her plagues on us thro' thee?—and thee?  
Plague me not, Khalil, for their fault!

*Kha.*

Oh, shame!

Thus breaks to-day on you, the mystic tribe  
Who, flying the approach of Osman, bore  
Our faith, a merest spark, from Syria's Ridge  
Its birth-place, hither! Let the sea divide  
These hunters from their prey, you said, and safe  
In this dim islet's virgin solitude  
Tend we our faith, the spark, till happier time  
Fan it to fire; till Hakeem rise again,  
According to his word that, in the flesh  
Which faded on Mokattam ages since,  
He, at our extreme need, would interpose,  
And, reinstating all in power and bliss,  
Lead us himself to Lebanon once more.  
Was't not thus you departed years ago,  
Ere I was born?

*Druses.*

'Twas even thus, years ago.

*Kha.* And did you call—(according to old laws  
Which bid us, lest the Sacred grow Prophane,  
Assimilate ourselves in outward rites  
With strangers fortune makes our lords, and live  
As Christian with the Christian, Jew with Jew,  
Druse only with the Druses)—did you call  
Or no, to stand, 'twixt you and Osman's rage,

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

(Mad to pursue e'en hither thro' the sea  
The remnant of your tribe) a race self-vowed  
To endless warfare with his hordes and him,  
The White-cross Knights of the adjacent Isle?

*Kar.* And why else rend we down, wrench up,  
raze out?

These Knights of Rhodes we thus solicited  
For help, bestowed on us a fiercer pest  
Than aught we fled—their Prefect; who began  
His promised mere paternal governance,  
By a prompt massacre of all our Sheikhs  
Able to thwart the Order in its scheme  
Of crushing, with our nationalities,  
Each chance of our return, and taming us  
Bond slaves to Rhodes for ever—all, he thinks  
To end by this day's treason.

*Kha.* Say I not?

You, fitted to the Order's purposes,  
You Sheikhs cut off, your very garb proscribed,  
Must yet receive one degradation more;  
The Knights at last throw off the mask—transfer,  
As tributary now, and appanage,  
This islet they are but protectors of,  
To their own ever-craving lord, the Church  
Which licenses all crimes that pay it thus—  
You, from their Prefect, were to be consigned  
Pursuant to I know not what vile pact,  
To the Knights' Patriarch, ardent to outvie  
His predecessor in all wickedness;  
When suddenly rose Djabal in the midst,  
Djabal, the man in semblance, but our God  
Confessed by signs and portents. Ye saw fire  
Bicker round Djabal, heard strange music flit  
Bird-like about his brow?

*Druses.* We saw—we heard!

Djabal is Hakeem, the incarnate Dread,  
The phantasm Khalif, King of Prodigies!

*Kha.* And as he said hath not our Khalif done,  
And so disposed events (from land to land  
Passing invisibly) that when, this morn,

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

The pact of villany complete, there comes  
This Patriarch's Nuncio with this Master's Prefect  
Their treason to consummate,—each will face  
For a crouching handful, an uplifted nation;  
For simulated Christians, confessed Druses;  
And, for slaves past hope of the Mother-mount,  
Freedmen returning there 'neath Venice' flag;  
That Venice, which the Hospitallers' foe,  
Grants us from Candia escort home at price  
Of our relinquished isle—Rhodes counts her own—  
Venice, whose promised argosies should stand  
Toward the harbour: is it now that you, and you,  
And you, selected from the rest to bear  
The burthen of the Khalif's secret, further  
To-day's event, entitled by your wrongs,  
And witness in the Prefect's hall his fate—  
That you dare clutch these gauds? Ay, drop them!

*Kar.*

True,

Most true, all this; and yet, may one dare hint,  
Thou art the youngest of us?—tho' employed  
Abundantly as Djabal's confidant,  
Transmitter of his mandates, even now:  
Much less, when'er beside him Anael graces  
The cedar throne, his Queen-bride, art thou like  
To occupy its lowest step that day!  
Now, Khalil, wert thou checked as thou aspirest,  
Forbidden such or such an honor,—say,  
Would silence serve so amply?

*Kha.*

Karshook thinks

I covet honors? Well, nor idly thinks!  
Honors? I have demanded of them all  
The greatest!

*Kar.*

I supposed so.

*Kha.*

Judge yourselves!

Turn—thus: 'tis in the alcove at the back  
Of yonder-columned porch, whose entrance now  
The veil hides, that our Prefect holds his state:  
Receives the Nuncio, when the one, from Rhodes,  
The other lands from Syria; there they meet.  
Now, I have stued with earnest prayers . . .

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

*Kar.*

For what

Shall the Bride's brother vainly sue?

*Kha.*

That mine—

Avenging in one blow a myriad wrongs,

—Might be the hand to slay the Prefect there!

Djabal reserves that office for himself. [*A silence.*]

Thus far, as youngest of you all, I speak

—Scarce more enlightened than yourselves: since,  
near

As I approach him, nearer as I trust

Soon to approach our Master, he reveals

Only the God's power, not the glory yet:

Therefore I reasoned with you: now, as servant

To Djabal, bearing his authority,

Hear me appoint your several posts! Till noon

None sees him save myself and Anael—once

The deed achieved, our Khalif, casting off

The embodied Awe's tremendous mystery,

The weakness of the flesh disguise, resumes

His proper glory, ne'er to fade again.

*Enter a Druse.*

*The Druse.* Our Prefect lands from Rhodes!—Without a sign

That he suspects aught since he left our Isle;

Nor in his train a single guard beyond

The few he sailed with hence: so have we learned

From Loys . . .

*Kar.*

Loys? Is not Loys gone

For ever?

*Ayoob.* Loys, the Frank Knight, returned?

*The Druse.* Loys, the boy, stood on the leading  
prow

Conspicuous in his gay attire,—and leapt

Into the surf the foremost: since day-dawn

I kept watch to the Northward; take but note

Of my poor vigilance to Djabal!

*Kha.*

Peace!

Thou, Karshook, with thy company, receive



## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

The Prefect as appointed : see, all keep  
The wonted shew of servitude : announce  
His entry here by the accustomed peal  
Of trumpets, then await the further pleasure  
Of Djabal ! (Loys back, whom Djabal sent  
To Rhodes that we might spare the single Knight  
Worth sparing !)

*Enter a second Druse.*

*The Druse.* I espied it first ! Say I  
First spied the Nuncio's galley from the South !  
Saidst thou a Crossed-key's Flag would flap the mast ?  
It nears apace ! One galley and no more—  
If Djabal chance to ask who spied the flag  
Forget not, I it was !

*Kha.* Thou, Ayoob, bring  
The Nuncio and his followers hither ! Break  
One rule prescribed, ye wither in your blood  
Die at your fault !

*Enter a third Druse.*

*The Druse.* I shall see home, see home !  
—Shall banquet in the sombre groves again !  
Hail to thee, Khalil ! Venice looms afar ;  
The argosies of Venice, like a cloud,  
Bear up from Candia in the distance !

*Kha.* Joy !  
Summon our people, Raghib ! Bid all forth !  
Tell them the long-kept secret, old and young !  
Set free the captives, let the trampled raise  
Their faces from the dust, because at length  
The cycle is complete, God Hakeem's reign  
Begins anew ! Say, Venice for our guard,  
Ere night we steer for Syria ! Hear you, Druses ?  
Hear you this crowning witness to the claims  
Of Djabal ? Oh, I spoke of hope and fear,  
Reward and punishment, because he bade  
Who has the right ; for me, what should I say



## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

But, mar not those imperial lineaments,  
No majesty of all that rapt regard  
Vex by the least omission! Let him rise  
Without a check from you!

*Druses.* Let Djabal rise !

*Enter LOYS.—The Druses are silent.*

*Loys.* Who speaks of Djabal?—for I seek him,  
friends!

[*Aside.*] *Tu Dieu!* 'Tis as our Isle broke out in song  
For joy, its Prefect-incubus drops off  
To-day, and I succeed him in his rule!  
But no—they cannot dream of their good fortune!  
[*Aloud.*] Peace to you, Druses! I have tidings for  
you.

But first for Djabal: where's your tall bewitcher,  
With that small Arab thin-lipped silver mouth?

*Kha.* [*Aside to KAR.*] Loys, in truth ! Yet Djabal cannot err !

*Kar.* [to KHA.] And who takes charge of Loys?  
That's forgotten.

Despite thy wariness ! Will Loys stand  
And see his comrade slaughtered ?

*Loys.* [*Aside.*]                      How they shrink

And whisper, with those rapid faces! What?  
The sight of me in their oppressors' garb  
Strikes terror to the simple tribe? God's shame  
On those that bring our Order ill repute!  
But all's at end now; better days begin  
For these mild mountaineers from over-sea;  
The timidest shall have in me no Prefect  
To cower at thus! [*Aloud.*] I ask for Diabal—

Kar. [Aside.] Better

One lured him, ere he can suspect, inside  
The corridor; 'twere easy to despatch  
A youngster. [to LOYS.] Djabal passed some minutes  
since

'Thro' yonder porch, and . . .

*Kha.* [*Aside.*] Hold! What, him despatch?

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

The only Christian of them all we charge  
No tyranny upon? Who,—noblest Knight  
Of all that learned from time to time their trade  
Of lust and cruelty among us,—heir  
To Europe's pomps, a truest child of pride,—  
Yet stood between the Prefect and ourselves  
From the beginning? Loys, Djabal makes  
Account of, and precisely sent to Rhodes  
For safety?—I take charge of him!

[To LOYS.]                      Sir Loys,—

*Loys.* There, cousins! Does Sir Loys strike you dead?

*Kha.* [advancing.] Djabal has intercourse with few  
or none

Till noontide: but, your pleasure?

*Loys.*    “Intercourse

“With few or none?”—(Ah, Khalil, when you spoke  
I saw not your smooth face! All health!—and health  
To Anael! How fares Anael?)—“Intercourse

“With few or none?” Forget you, I've been friendly  
With Djabal long ere you or any Druse?

—Enough of him at Rennes, I think, beneath  
The Duke my father's roof! He'd tell by the hour,  
With fixed white eyes beneath his swarthy brow,  
Plausiblist stories . . .

*Kha.*    Stories, say you?—Ah,

The quaint attire!

*Loys.*    My dress for the last time!

How sad I cannot make you understand,  
This ermine, o'er a shield, betokens me  
Of Bretagne, ancientest of provinces  
And noblest; and, what's best and oldest there,  
See, Dreux', our house's blazon, which the Nuncio  
Tacks to an Hospitaller's vest to-day!

*Kha.* The Nuncio we await? What brings you back  
From Rhodes, Sir Loys?

*Loys.*    How your island tribe

Forget, the world's awake while here you drowse!  
What brings me back? What should not bring me, rather?  
Our Patriarch's Nuncio visits you to-day—  
Is not my year's probation out? I come

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

To take the knightly vows.

*Kha.* What's that you wear?

*Loys.* This Rhodian cross? The cross your Prefect wore.  
You should have seen, as I saw, the full Chapter  
Rise, to a man, while they transferred this cross  
From that unworthy Prefect's neck to . . . (fool—  
My secret will escape me!) In a word,  
My year's probation 's passed, and Knight ere eve  
Am I; bound, like the rest, to yield my wealth  
To the common stock, to live in chastity,  
(We Knights espouse alone our Order's fame)  
—Change this gay weed for the black white-crossed gown,  
And fight to death against the Infidel  
—Not, therefore, against you, you Christians with  
Such partial difference only as befits  
The peace fullest of tribes! But Khalil, prithee,  
Is not the Isle brighter than wont to-day?

*Kha.* Ah, the new sword!

*Loys.* See now! You handle sword  
As 'twere a camel-staff! Pull! That's my motto,  
Annealed, "*Pro fide*," on the blade in blue.

*Kha.* No curve in it? Surely a blade should curve!

*Loys.* Straight from the wrist! Loose—it should  
poise itself!

*Kha.* [*waving with irrepressible exultation the sword.*]

We are a nation, Loys, of old fame  
Among the mountains! Rights have we to keep  
With the sword too!

[*Remembering himself.*] But I forget—you bid me  
Seek Djabal?

*Loys.* What! A sword's sight scares you not?  
(The People I will make of him and them!  
Oh, let my Prefect-sway begin at once!)  
Bring Djabal—say, indeed, that come he must!

*Kha.* At noon seek Djabal in the Prefect's Chamber,  
And find—[*Aside.*] Nay, 'tis thy cursed race's token,  
Frank pride, no special insolence of thine!

[*Aloud.*] Tarry and I will do your bidding, Loys.

[*To the rest aside.*] Now, forth you! I proceed to Djabal  
straight.

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

Leave this poor boy, who knows not what he says.  
Oh, will it not add joy even to thy joy,  
Djabal, that I report all friends were true :

*KHALIL goes, followed by the Druses.*

*Loys. Tu Dieu!* How happy I shall make these  
Druses!

Was 't not surpassingly contrived of me  
To get the long list of their wrongs by heart,  
Then take the first pretence for stealing off  
From these poor islanders, present myself  
Sudden at Rhodes before the noble Chapter,  
And (as best proof of ardour in its cause  
Which ere to-night will have become, too, mine)  
Acquaint it with this plague-sore in its body,  
This Prefect and his villanous career?  
The princely Synod! All I dared request  
Was his dismissal; and they graciously  
Consigned his very office to myself—  
Myself may heal whate'er's diseased!

*And good*

For them, they did so! Since I never felt  
How lone a lot, tho' brilliant, I embrace,  
Till now that, past retrieval, it is mine—  
To live thus, and thus die! Yet, as I leapt  
On shore, so home a feeling greeted me  
That I could half believe in Djabal's story,  
He used to tempt my father with, at Rennes—  
And me, too, since the story brought me here—  
Of some Count Dreux and ancestor of ours  
Who, sick of wandering from Bouillon's war,  
Left his old name in Lebanon.

*Long days*

At least to spend in the Isle! and, my news known  
An hour hence, what if Anael turns on me  
The great black eyes I must forget?

*Why, fool,*

Recall them, then? My business is with Djabal,  
Not Anael! Djabal tarries: if I seek him?—  
The Isle is brighter than its wont to-day!

# THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

## ACT II

*Enter DJABAL.*

*Dja.* That a strong man should think himself a God!  
I—Hakeem? To have wandered thro' the world,  
Sown falsehood, and thence reaped now scorn, now faith,  
For my one chant with many a change, my tale  
Of outrage, and my prayer for vengeance—this  
Required, forsooth, no mere man's faculty,  
Nor less than Hakeem's? The persuading Loys  
To pass probation here; the getting access  
By Loys to the Prefect; worst of all,  
The gaining my tribe's confidence by fraud  
That would disgrace the very Franks,—a few  
Of Europe's secrets that subdue the flame,  
The wave,—to ply a simple tribe with these,  
Took Hakeem?

And I feel this first to-day!  
Does the day break, is the hour imminent  
When one deed, when my whole life's deed, my deed  
Must be accomplished? Hakeem? Why the God?  
Shout, rather, "Djabal, Youssof's child, thought slain  
"With his whole race, the Druses' Sheikhs, this Prefect  
"Endeavoured to extirpate—saved, a child,  
"Returns from traversing the world, a man,  
"Able to take revenge, lead back the march  
"To Lebanon"—so shout, and who gainsays?  
But now, because delusion mixed itself  
Insensibly with this career, all's changed!  
Have I brought Venice to afford us convoy?  
"True—but my jugglings wrought that!" Put I heart  
Into our people where no heart lurked?"—"Ah,  
"What cannot an impostor do!"

Not this!  
Not do this which I do! Not bid, avaunt  
Falsehood! Thou shalt not keep thy hold on me!  
—Nor even get a hold on me! 'Tis now—  
This day—hour—minute—'tis as here I stand

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

On the accursed threshold of the Prefect,  
That I am found deceiving and deceived!  
And now what do I do?—Hasten to the few  
Deceived, ere they deceive the many—shout,  
As I professed, I did believe myself!  
Say, Druses, had you seen a butchery—  
If Ayooob, Karshook saw—Maani there  
Must tell you how I saw my father sink;  
My mother's arms twine still about my neck;  
I hear my brother's shriek, here's yet the scar  
Of what was meant for my own death-blow—say,  
If you had woke like me, grown year by year  
Out of the tumult in a far-off clime,  
Would it be wondrous such delusion grew?  
I walked the world, asked help at every hand;  
Came help or no? Not this and this? Which helps  
When I returned with, found the Prefect here,  
The Druses here, all here but Hakeem's self,  
The Khalif of the thousand prophecies,  
Reserved for such a juncture,—could I call  
My mission aught but Hakeem's? Promised Hakeem  
More than performs the Djabal—you absolve?  
—Me, will never shame before the crowd  
Yet happily ignorant?—Me, both throngs surround  
The few deceived, the many unabused,  
—Who, thus surrounded, slay for you and them  
The Prefect, lead to Lebanon! No Khalif,  
But Sheikh once more! Mere Djabal—not. . . .

*Enter KHALIL hastily.*

*Kha.*

—God Hakeem!

'Tis told! The whole Druse nation knows thee, Hakeem,  
As we! and mothers lift on high their babes  
Who seem aware, so glisten their great eyes,  
Thou hast not failed us; ancient brows are proud!  
Our Elders could not earlier die, it seems,  
Than at thy coming! The Druse heart is thine!  
Take it! my Lord and theirs, be thou adored!

*Dja.* [*Aside.*] Adored!—but I renounce it utterly!

*Kha.* Already are they instituting choirs  
And dances to the Khalif, as of old

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

'Tis chronicled thou bad'st them.

*Dja.* [*Aside.*]

I abjure it!

'Tis not mine—not for me!

*Kha.*

Why pour they wine  
Flavoured like honey and bruised mountain herbs?  
Or wear those strings of sun-dried cedar-fruit?  
Oh—let me tell thee—Esaad, we supposed  
Doting, is carried forth, eager to see  
The last sun rise on the Isle—he can see now!  
The shamed Druse women never wept before:  
They can look up when we reach home, they say.  
Smell!—Sweet cane, saved in Lilith's breast thus long—  
Sweet!—it grows wild in Lebanon. And I  
Alone do nothing for thee! 'Tis my office  
Just to announce what well thou know'st—but thus  
Thou bidst me. At this selfsame moment tend  
The Prefect, Nuncio, and the Admiral  
Hither, by their three sea-paths—nor forget  
Who were the trusty watchers!—Thou forget?  
Like me, who do forget that Anael bade. . . .

*Dja.* [*Aside.*] Ay, Anael, Anael—is that said at last?  
Louder than all, that would be said, I knew!  
What does abjuring mean, confessing mean,  
To the people? Till that woman crossed my path,  
On went I, solely for my people's sake:  
I saw her, and I first saw too myself,  
And slackened pace: "if I should prove indeed  
Hakeem—with Anael by!"

*Kha.* [*Aside.*]

Ah, he is rapt!

Dare I at such a moment break on him  
Even to do my sister's bidding? Yes!  
The eyes are Djabal's, and not Hakeem's yet!  
Though but till I have spoken this, perchance.

*Dja.* [*Aside.*] To yearn to tell her, and yet have  
no one

Great heart's-word that will tell her! I could gasp  
Doubtless one such word out, and die!

[*Aloud.*]

You said

That Anael . . .

*Kha.* . . . Fain would see thee, speak with thee,

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

Before thou change, discard this Djabal's shape  
She knows, for Hakeem's shape she is to know :  
Something's to say that will not from her mind :  
I know not what—"Let him but come!" she said  
*Dja.* [*Half-apart.*] My nation—all my Druses—how  
fare they?

Those I must save, and suffer thus to save,  
Hold they their posts? Wait they their Khalif too?

*Kha.* All at the signal pant to flock around  
That banner of a brow!

*Dja.* [*Aside.*] And when they flock,  
Confess them this—and after, for reward,  
Be chased with howlings to her feet perchance?  
—Have the poor outraged Druses, deaf and blind,  
Precede me there—forestall my story, there—  
Tell it in mocks and jeers—

I lose myself!

Who needs a Hakeem to direct him now?  
I need the veriest child—why not this child?

[*Turning abruptly to KHALIL.*]

You are a Druse too, Khalil; you were nourished  
Like Anael with our mysteries: if she  
Could vow, so nourished, to love only one  
Who should revenge the Druses, whence proceeds  
Your silence? Wherefore made you no essay,  
Who thus implicitly can execute  
My bidding? What have I done, you could not?  
Who, knowing more than Anael the prostration  
Of our once lofty tribe, the daily life  
Of this detested . . .

Does he come, you say,  
This Prefect? All's in readiness?

*Kha.* The sword,  
The sacred robe, the Khalif's mystic tiar,  
Laid up so long, are all disposed beside  
The Prefect's chamber.

*Dja.* —Why did you despair?

*Kha.* I know our Nation's state? Too surely know,  
As thou, who speak'st to prove me! Wrongs like  
ours



## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

Should wake revenge: but when I sought the  
wronged

And spoke,—“The Prefect stabbed your son—arise!  
“Your daughter, while you starve, eats shameless  
bread

“In his pavilion—then, arise!”—my speech

Fell idly—’twas, “Be silent, or worse fare!

“Endure, till time’s slow cycle prove complete!

“Who may’st thou be that takest on thee to thrust

“Into this peril—art thou Hakeem?” No!

Only a mission like thy mission renders

All these obedient at a breath, subdues

Their private passions, brings their wills to one!

*Dja.* You think so?

*Kha.* Even now—when they have witnessed

Thy miracles—had I not threatened them

With Hakeem’s vengeance, they would mar the  
whole,

And lie ere this, each with his special prize,

Safe in his dwelling, leaving our main hope

To perish! No! When these have kissed thy feet

At Lebanon, the Past purged off, the Present

Clear,—for the Future, even Hakeem’s mission

May end, and I perchance, or any youth,

Can rule them thus renewed.—I talk to thee!

*Dja.* And wisely. (He is Anael’s brother, pure

As Anael’s self.) Go say, I come to her.

Haste! I will follow you.

[*KHALIL goes.*

Oh, not confess

To these—the blinded multitude—confess,

Before at least the fortune of my deed

Half authorize its means! Only to her

Let me confess my fault, who in my path

Curled up like incense from a mage-king’s tomb

When he would have the wayfarer descend

Thro’ the earth’s rift and take hid treasure up.

When should my first child’s-carelessness have stopped

If not when I, whose lone youth hurried past

Letting each joy ’scape for the Druses’ sake,

At length recovered in one Druse all joys?

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

Were her brow brighter, her eyes richer, still  
Would I confess! On the gulf's verge I pause.  
How could I slay the Prefect, thus and thus?  
Anaël, be mine to guard me, not destroy! [Goes.

*Enter ANAËL, and MAANI, who is assisting to array  
her in the ancient dress of the Druses.*

*An.* Those saffron-vestures of the tabret-girls!  
Comes Djabal, think you?

*Maa.* Doubtless Djabal comes.

*An.* Dost thou snow-swathe thee kinglier, Lebanon,  
Than in my dreams?—Nay, all the tresses off  
My forehead—look I lovely so? He says  
That I am lovely.

*Maa.* Lovely! nay, that hangs  
Awry.

*An.* You tell me how a khandjar hangs?  
The sharp side, thus, along the heart, see, marks  
The maiden of our class. Are you content  
For Djabal as for me?

*Maa.* Content, my child.

*An.* Oh, mother, tell me more of him. He comes  
Even now—tell more, fill up my soul with him!

*Maa.* And did I not . . . yes, surely . . . tell you  
all?

*An.* What will be changed in Djabal when the  
Change  
Arrives? Which feature? Not his eyes!

*Maa.* 'Tis writ,  
Our Hakeem's eyes rolled fire and clove the dark  
Superbly.

*An.* Not his eyes! His voice perhaps?  
Yet that's no change; for a grave current lived  
—Grandly beneath the surface ever lived,  
That, scattering, broke as in live silver spray  
While . . . ah, the bliss . . . he would discourse to me  
In that enforced, still fashion, word on word!  
'Tis the old current which must swell thro' that,  
For what least tone, Maani, could I lose?

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

'Tis surely not his voice will change!

—If Hakeem

Only stood by! If Djabal, somehow, passed  
Out of the radiance as from out a robe;  
Possessed, but was not it!

He lived with you?

Well—and that morning Djabal saw me first  
And heard my vow never to wed but one  
Who saved my People—on that day . . . proceed!

*Maa.* Once more, then: from the time of his return  
In secret, changed so since he left the Isle  
That I, who screened our Emir's last of sons,  
This Djabal, from the Prefect's massacre  
—Who bade him ne'er forget the child he was,  
—Who dreamed so long the youth he might become—  
I knew not in the man that child; the man  
Who spoke alone of hopes to save our tribe,  
How he had gone from land to land to save  
Our tribe—allies were sure, nor foes to dread;  
And much he mused, days, nights, alone he mused;  
But never till that day when, pale and worn  
As by a persevering woe, he cried  
“Is there not one Druse left me?”—And I showed  
The way to Khalil's and your hiding-place  
From the abhorred eye of the Prefect here,  
So that he saw you, heard you speak—till then,  
Never did he announce—(how the moon seemed  
To ope and shut, the while, above us both!)  
—His mission was the mission promised us—  
The cycle had revolved—all things renewing,  
He was lost Hakeem clothed in flesh to lead  
His children home anon, now veiled to work  
Great purposes—the Druses now would change.

*An.* And they have changed! And obstacles did  
sink,

And furtherances rose! And round his form  
Played fire, and music beat her angel wings!  
My people, let me more rejoice, oh, more  
For you than for myself! Did I but watch  
Afar the pageant, feel our Khalif pass,

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

One of the throng, how proud were I—tho' ne'er  
Singled by Djabal's glance! But to be chosen  
His own from all, the most his own of all,  
To be exalted with him, side by side.  
Lead the exulting Druses, meet . . . ah, how  
Worthily meet the maidens who await  
Ever beneath the cedars—how deserve  
This honor, in their eyes? So bright are they  
That saffron-vestured sound the tabrets there—  
The girls who throng there in my dreams! One hour  
And all is over: how shall I do aught  
That may deserve next hour's exalting?—How?—

[*Suddenly to MAANI*

Mother, I am not worthy of him! I read it  
Still in his eyes! He stands as if to tell me  
I am not, yet forbears! Why else revert  
To one theme ever?—how mere human gifts  
Suffice him in myself—whose worship fades,  
Whose awe goes ever off at his approach,  
As now, that when he comes . . .

[*As DJABAL enters.*] Oh, why is it  
I cannot kneel to you?

*Dja.* Rather, 'tis I  
Should kneel to you, my Anael!

*An.* Even so!  
For never seem you—shall I speak the truth?—  
Never a God to me! 'Tis the Man's hand,  
Eye, voice! Oh, do you veil these to our people,  
Or but to me? To them, I think, to them!  
And brightness is their veil, shadow—my truth!  
You mean that I should never kneel to you  
—So I will kneel!

*Dja.* [*preventing her.*] No—no!

[*Feeling the khandjar as he raises her.*

Ha, have you chosen . . .

*An.* The khandjar with our ancient garb. But,  
Djabal,

Change not, be not exalted yet! give time  
That I may plan more, perfect more. My blood  
Beats—beats!

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

[*Aside.*] O must I then—since Loys leaves us  
Never to come again, renew in me  
Those doubts so near effaced already—must  
I needs confess them now to Djabal?—Own  
That when I saw the stranger—heard his voice,  
My faith fell, and the woeful thought flashed first  
That each effect of Djabal's presence, taken  
For proof of more than human attributes  
In him, by me whose heart at his approach  
Beat fast, whose brain while he was by swam round,  
Whose soul at his departure died away,  
—That every such effect might have been wrought  
In others' frames, tho' not in mine, by Loys  
Or any merely mortal presence? Doubt  
Is fading fast; shall I reveal it now?  
How can I be rewarded presently,  
With doubt unexpiated, undisclosed?

*Dja.* [*Aside.*] Avow the truth? I cannot! In what  
words

Avow that all she loves in me is false?  
—Which yet has served that flower-like love of hers  
To climb by, like the clinging gourd, and clasp  
With its divinest wealth of leaf and bloom.  
Could I take down the prop-work, in itself  
So vile, yet interlaced and overlaid  
With painted cups and fruitage—might these still  
Bask in the sun, unconscious their own strength  
Of matted stalk and tendril had replaced  
The old support thus silently withdrawn!  
But no; the beauteous fabric crushes too.  
'Tis not for my sake but for Anael's sake  
I leave her soul this Hakeem where it leans!  
Oh, could I vanish from them—quit the Isle!  
And yet,—a thought comes: here my work is done  
At every point; the Druses must return—  
Have convoy to their birth-place back, whoe'er  
The leader be, myself or any Druse—  
Venice is pledged to that: 'tis for myself,  
For my own vengeance in the Prefect's death,  
I stay now, not for them—to slay or spare

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

The Prefect, whom imports it save myself?  
He cannot bar their passage from the Isle;  
What would his death be but my own reward?  
Then, mine, I will forego. It is foregone!  
Let him escape with all my House's blood!  
Ere he can reach land, Djabal disappears,  
And Hakeem, Anael loved, shall, fresh as first,  
Live in her memory, keeping her sublime  
Above the world. She cannot touch that world  
By ever knowing what I truly am,  
Since Loys,—of mankind the only one  
Able to link my present with my past,  
My life in Europe with my Island life,  
Thence, able to unmask me,—I've disposed  
Safely at last at Rhodes, and . . .

*Enter KHALIL.*

*Kha.* Loys greets thee!

*Dja.* Loys? To drag me back? It cannot be!

*An.* [*Aside.*] Loys! Ah, doubt may not be stifled so!

*Kha.* Can I have erred that thou so gazest? Yes,  
I told thee not, in the glad press of tidings  
Of higher import, Loys is returned  
Before the Prefect, with, if possible,  
Twice the light-heartedness of old. As though  
On some inauguration he expects,  
'To-day, the world's fate hung!

*Dja.* —And asks for me?

*Kha.* Thou knowest all things! Thee in chief he  
greets,

But every Druse of us is to be happy  
At his arrival, he declares: were Loys  
Thou, Master, he could have no wider soul  
To take us in with. How I love that Loys!

*Dja.* [*Aside.*] Shame winds me with her tether round  
and round!

*An.* [*Aside.*] Loys? I take the trial! it is meet,  
The little I can do, be done; that faith,  
All I can offer, want no perfecting

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

Which my own act may compass. Aye, this way  
All may go well, nor that ignoble doubt  
Be chased by other aid than mine. Advance  
Close to my fear, weigh Loys with my Lord,  
The mortal's with the more than mortal's gifts!

*Dja.* [*Aside.*] Before, there were so few deceived!  
and now

There's doubtless not one least Druse in the Isle  
But (having learned my superhuman claims,  
And calling me his Khalif-God) will clash  
The whole truth out from Loys at first word!  
While Loys, for his part, will hold me up,  
With a Frank's unimaginable scorn  
Of such imposture, to my people's eyes!  
Could I but hold him longer yet awhile  
From them, amuse him here until I plan  
How he and I at once may leave the Isle?  
Khalil I cannot part with from my side—  
My only help in this emergency:  
There's Anael!

*An.* Please you?

*Dja.* (Anael—none but she!)

[*To ANAEL.*] I pass some minutes in the chamber there,  
Ere I see Loys: you shall speak with him  
Until I join you. Khalil follows me.

*An.* [*Aside.*] As I divined: he bids me save myself,  
Offers me a probation—I accept!  
Let me see Loys!

*Loys.* [*without.*] Djabal!

*An.* [*Aside.*] 'Tis his voice.  
The smooth Frank trifler with our people's wrongs,  
The self-complacent boy-inquirer, loud  
On this and that inflicted tyranny,  
—Aught serving to parade an ignorance  
Of how wrong feels, inflicted! Let me close  
With what I viewed at distance; let myself  
Probe this delusion to the core!

*Dja.* He comes!  
Khalil, along with me! while Anael waits  
Till I return once more—and but once more!

# THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

## ACT III

ANAEL *and* LOYS.

*An.* Here leave me! Here I wait anotner. 'Twas  
For no mad protestation of a love  
Like this you say possesses you, I came.

*Loys.* Love—how protest a love I dare not feel?  
Mad words may doubtless have escaped me—you  
Are here—I only feel you here!

*An.* No more.

*Loys.* But once again, whom could you love? I dare,  
Alas, say nothing of myself, who am  
A Knight now, for when Knighthood we embrace,  
Love we abjure: so speak on safely—speak,  
Lest I speak, and betray my faith so! Sure  
To say your breathing passes thro' me, changes  
My blood to spirit, and my spirit to you,  
As Heaven the sacrificer's wine to it—  
This is not to protest my love? You said  
You could love one . . .

*An.* One only! We are bent  
To earth—who raises up my tribe, I love;  
The Prefect bows us—who removes him; we  
Have ancient rights—who gives them back to us,  
I love.—Forbear me! Let my hand go!

*Loys.* Him  
You could love only? Where is Djabal? Stay!  
[*Aside.*] Yet wherefore stay? Who does this but my-  
self?

Had I apprized her that I come to do  
Just this, what more could she acknowledge? No!  
She sees into my heart's core: what is it  
Feeds either cheek with red, as June some rose?  
Why turns she from me? Ah fool, over-fond  
To dream I could call up . . .

. . . What never dream  
Yet feigned! 'Tis love! Oh Anael, speak to me!  
Djabal!



## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

*An.* Seek Djabal by the Prefect's chamber  
At noon! *[She paces the room.]*

*Loys. [Aside.]* And am I not the Prefect now?  
Is it my fate to be the only one  
Able to win her love, the only one  
Unable to accept her love? The Past  
Breaks up beneath my footing: came I here  
This morn as to a slave, to set her free  
And take her thanks, and then spend day by day  
Content beside her in the Isle? What works  
This knowledge in me now! Her eye has broken  
The faint disguise away; for Anael's sake  
I left the Isle, for her espoused the cause  
Of the Druses, all for her I thought, till now,  
To live without!

—As I must live! To-day  
Ordains me Knight, forbids me—never shall  
Forbid me to possess myself, heart, arm,  
Thy soldier!

*An.* Djabal you demanded, comes!

*Loys. [Aside.]* What wouldst thou, Loys? See him?  
Nought beside

Is wanting: I have felt his voice a spell  
From first to last. He brought me here, made known  
The Druses to me, drove me hence to seek  
Redress for them; and shall I meet him now,  
When nought is wanting but a word of his,  
To—what?—induce me to spurn hope, faith, pride,  
Honor away,—to cast my lot among  
His tribe, become a proverb in men's mouths,  
Breaking my high pact of companionship  
With those who graciously bestowed on me  
The very opportunities I turn  
Against them.

Let me not see Djabal now!

*An.* The Prefect also comes!

*Loys. [Aside.]* Him let me see,  
Not Djabal! Him, degraded at a word,  
To please me,—to attest belief in me—  
And, after, Djabal! Yes, ere I return

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

To her, the Nuncio's vow shall have destroyed  
This heart's rebellion, and coerced this will  
For ever.

Anael, not before the vows  
Irrevocably fix me . . .

Let me fly !

The Prefect, or I lose myself for ever ! [Goes.

An. Yes, I am calm now ; just one way remains—  
One, to attest my faith in him : for, see,  
I were quite lost else : Loys, Djabal, stand  
On either side—two men ! I balance looks  
And words, give Djabal a man's preference,  
No more. In Djabal, Hakeem is absorbed !  
And for a love like this, the God who saves  
My race, selects me for his bride ! One way !—

*Enter DJABAL.*

Dja. [*to himself.*] No moment is to waste, then ; 'tis  
resolved !

If Khalil may be trusted to lead back  
The Druses, and if Loys can be lured  
Out of the Isle—if I procure his silence,  
Or promise never to return at least,—  
All's over ! Even now my bark awaits—  
I reach the next wild islet and the next,  
And lose myself beneath the sun for ever !  
And now, to Anael !

An. . . . . Djabal, I am thine !

Dja. Mine ? Djabal's ?—As if Hakeem had not been ?

An. Not Djabal's ? Say first, do you read my thoughts ?  
Why need I speak, if you can read my thoughts ?

Dja. I do not, I have said a thousand times.

An. (My secret's safe, I shall surprise him yet !)  
Djabal, I knew your secret from the first—  
Djabal, when first I saw you . . . (by our porch  
You leant, and pressed the tinkling veil away,  
And one fringe fell behind your neck—I see !)  
. . . I knew you were not human, for I said  
“This dim secluded house where the sea beats  
Is Heaven to me—my people's huts are Hell  
To them ; this august form will follow me,

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

Mix with the waves his voice will,—I have him;  
And they, the Prefect; Oh, my happiness  
Rounds to the full whether I choose or no!  
His eyes met mine, he was about to speak,  
His hand grew damp—surely he meant to say  
He let me love him: in that moment's bliss  
I shall forget my people pine for home—  
They pass and repass with pallid eyes!"  
I vowed at once a certain vow; this vow—  
Not to embrace you till my tribe was saved.  
Embrace me!

*Dja.* [*Apart.*] And she loved me! Nought remained  
But that! Nay, Anael, is the Prefect dead?

*An.* Ah, you reproach me! True, his death crowns  
all,

I know—or should know—and I would do much,  
Believe! but, death—Oh, you, who have known death,  
Would never doom the Prefect, were death fearful  
As we report!

Death!—a fire curls within us  
From the foot's palm, and fills up to the brain,  
Up, out, then shatters the whole bubble-shell  
Of flesh, perchance!

Death!—witness, I would die,  
Whate'er death be, would venture now to die  
For Khalil—for Maani—what for thee?  
Nay but embrace me, Djabal, in assurance  
My vow will not be broken, for I must  
Do something to attest my faith in you,  
Be worthy of you!—

*Dja.* [*avoiding her.*] I come for that—to say  
Such an occasion is at hand: 'tis like  
I leave you—that we part, my Anael,—part  
For ever!

*An.* We part? Just so! I have succumbed,—  
I am, he thinks, unworthy—and nought less  
Will serve than such approval of my faith!  
Then, we part not! Remains there no way short  
Of that? Oh, not that!

Death!—Yet a hurt bird

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

Died in my hands—its eyes filmed—"Nay, it sleeps"  
I said, "will wake to-morrow well"—'twas dead!

*Dja.* I stand here and time fleets. Anael—I come  
To bid a last farewell to you: perhaps  
We never meet again—but, ere the Prefect  
Arrive . . .

*Enter KHALIL breathlessly.*

*Kha.* He's here! The Prefect! Twenty guards,  
No more—no sign he dreams of danger—all  
Awaits thee only—Ayoob, Karshook, keep  
Their posts—wait but the deed's accomplishment  
To join us with thy Druses to a man!  
Still holds his course the Nuncio—near and near  
The fleet from Candia's steering!

*Dja.* [*Aside.*] All is lost!  
—Or won?

*Kha.* And I have laid the sacred robes,  
The sword, the head-tiar, at the porch—the place  
Commanded—Thou wilt hear the Prefect's trumpet.

*Dja.* Then I keep Anael,—him then, past recal,  
I slay—'tis forced on me! As I began  
I must conclude—so be it!

*Kha.* For the rest  
(Save Loy's, our foe's solitary sword)  
All is so safe that . . . I will ne'er entreat  
Thy post again of thee—tho' danger's none,  
There must be glory only meet for thee  
In slaying the Prefect!

*An.* [*Aside.*] And 'tis now that Djabal  
Would leave me!—in the glory meet for him!

*Dja.* As glory, I would yield the deed to you,  
Or any one; what peril there may be,  
I keep. [*Aside.*] All things conspire to hound me on!  
Not now, my soul, draw back, at least! Not now!  
The course is plain, howe'er obscure all else—  
Once offer this tremendous sacrifice,  
Prevent what else will be irreparable,  
Secure these transcendental helps, regain

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

The Cedars—then let all dark clear itself!  
I slay him!

*Kha.* Anael, and no part for us!

[*To Dja.*] Hast thou possessed her with . . .

*Dja.* [*to AN.*] Whom speak you to?

What is it you behold there? Nay, this smile  
Turns stranger—shudder you? The man must die,  
As thousands of our race have died thro' him.  
One blow, and I discharge his weary soul  
From the flesh that pollutes it—let him fill  
Straight some new expiatory form, of earth  
Or sea, the reptile, or some æëry thing—  
What is there in his death?

*An.* My brother said,  
Is there no part in it for us?

*Dja.* For Khalil,—  
The trumpet will announce the Nuncio's entry;  
Here, I shall find the Prefect hastening  
In the Pavilion to receive him—here,  
I slay the Prefect; meanwhile Ayooob leads  
The Nuncio with his guards within—once these  
Secured in the outer hall, bid Ayooob bar  
Entry or egress till I give the sign  
Which waits the landing of the argosies  
You will announce to me; this double sign  
That justice is performed and help arrived,  
When Ayooob shall receive, but not before,  
Let him throw ope the palace doors, admit  
The Druses to behold their tyrant, ere  
We leave for ever this detested spot.  
Go, Khalil, hurry all—no pause—no pause!  
Whirl on the dream, secure to wake anon!

*Kha.* What sign? and who the bearer?

*Dja.* Who shall show  
My ring, admit to Ayooob—How she stands!  
Have I not . . . I must have some task for her.  
Anael! not that way! 'Tis the Prefect's chamber;  
Anael, keep you the ring—give you the sign!  
(It holds her safe amid the stir)—You will  
Be faithful?

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

*An.* [*taking the ring.*] I would fain be worthy of you!  
[*Trumpet without.*]

*Kha.* He comes!

*Dja.* And I too come!

*An.* One word, but one!

Say, shall you be exalted at the deed?

Then? On the instant?

*Dja.* I exalted? What?

He, there—we, thus—our wrongs revenged—our tribe

Set free—Oh, then shall I, assure yourself,

Shall you, shall each of us, be in his death

Exalted!

*Kha.* He is here!

*Dja.* Away—away! [*They go.*]

*Enter the PREFECT with Guards and LOYS.*

*The Prefect.* [*to Guards.*] Back, I say, to the galley  
every guard!

That's my sole care now; see each bench retains

Its complement of rowers; I embark

O' the instant, since this Knight will have it so.

Alas me! Could you have the heart, my Loys?

[*To a Guard who whispers.*] Oh, bring the holy Nuncio  
here forthwith! [*The Guards go.*]

Loys, a rueful sight, confess, to see

The grey discarded Prefect leave his post,

With tears i' the eye! So you are Prefect now?

You depose me—you succeed me? Ha, ha!

*Loys.* And dare you laugh, whom laughter less be-  
comes

Than yesterday's forced meekness we beheld . . .

*Pref.* . . . When you so eloquently pleaded, Loys,  
For my dismissal from the post?—Ah, meek  
With cause enough, consult the Nuncio else!

And wish him the like meekness—for so staunch

A servant of the church can scarce have bought

His share in the Isle, and paid for it, hard pieces!

You've my successor to condole with, Nuncio!

I shall be safe by then i' the galley, Loys!

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

*Loys.* You make as you would tell me you rejoice  
To leave your scene of . . .

*Pref.* Trade in the dear Druses ?  
Blood and sweat traffic? Spare what yesterday  
We had enough of! Drove I in the Isle  
A profitable game? Learn wit, my son,  
Which you'll need shortly! Did it never breed  
Suspicion in you, all was not pure profit,  
When I, the insatiate . . . and so forth . . . was bent  
On having a partaker in my rule?  
Why did I yield this Nuncio half the gain,  
If not that I might also shift . . . what on him?  
Half the peril, Loys!

*Loys.* Peril?

*Pref.* Hark you!  
I'd love you if you'd let me—this for reason,  
You save my life at price of . . . well, say risk  
At least, of yours. I came a long time since  
To the Isle; our Hospitallers bade me tame  
These savage wizards, and reward myself—

*Loys.* The Knights who so repudiate your crime?

*Pref.* Loys, the Knights! we doubtless understood  
Each other; as for trusting to reward  
From any friend beside myself . . . No, no!  
I clutched mine on the spot, when it was sweet,  
And I had taste for it. I felt these wizards  
Alive—was sure they were not on me, only  
When I was on them: but with age comes caution:  
And stinging pleasures please less and sting more.  
Year by year, fear by fear! The girls were brighter,  
Than ever ('faith there's yet one Anael left,  
I set my heart upon—Oh, prithee, let  
That brave new sword lie still!)—These joys looked  
brighter,

But silenter the town, too, as I passed.  
With this alcove's delicious memories  
Began to mingle visions of gaunt fathers,  
Quick-eyed sons, fugitives from the mine, the oar,  
Stealing to catch me: brief, when I began  
To quake with fear—(I think I hear the Chapter

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

Solicited to let me leave, now all  
Worth staying for was gained and gone!)—I say,  
Just when for the remainder of my life  
All methods of escape seemed lost—that then  
Up should a young hot-headed Loys spring,  
Talk very long and loud, in fine, compel  
The Knights to break their whole arrangement,  
have me

Home for pure shame—from this safehold of mine  
Where but ten thousand Druses seek my life,  
To my wild place of banishment, San Gines  
By Murcia, where my three fat manors lying,  
Purchased by gains here and the Nuncio's gold,  
Are all I have to guard me,—that such fortune  
Should fall to me, I hardly could expect!  
Therefore, I say, I'd love you!

*Loys.*

Can it be?

I play into your hands then? Oh, no, no!  
The Venerable Chapter, the Great Order  
Sunk o' the sudden into fiends of the pit?  
But I will back—will yet unveil you!

*Pref.*

*Me:*

To whom?—perhaps Sir Galeas, who in Chapter  
Shook his white head thrice—and some dozen times  
My hand this morning shook, for value paid  
To that Italian Saint, Sir Cosimo?—  
Indignant at my wringing year by year  
A thousand bezants from the coral-divers,  
As you recounted; felt he not aggrieved?  
Well might he—I allowed for his half-share  
Merely one hundred! To Sir . . .

*Loys.*

See! you dare

Inculcate the whole Order; yet should I,  
A youth, a sole voice, have the power to change  
Their evil way, had they been firm in it?  
Answer me!

*Pref.*

Oh, the son of Bretagne's Duke,  
And that son's wealth, the father's influence, too  
And the young arm, we'll even say, my Loys,  
—The fear of losing or diverting these



## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

Into another channel, by gainsaying  
 A novice too abruptly, could not influence  
 The Order! You might join, for aught they cared  
 Their red-cross rivals of the Temple! Well,  
 I thank you for my part, at all events!  
 Stay here till they withdraw you! You'll inhabit  
 This palace—sleep, perchance, in this alcove,  
 Where now I go to meet our holy friend:  
 Good! and now disbelieve me if you can:  
 This is the first time for long years I enter  
 Thus [*lifts the arras*] without feeling just as if I  
     lifted  
 The lid up of my tomb!

*Louys.* They share his crime!

God's punishment will overtake you yet!

*Prof.* Thank you it does not! Pardon this last flash;

I bear a sober visage presently  
With the disinterested Nuncio here—  
His purchase-money safe at Murcia too!  
Let me repeat—for the first time, no draught  
Coming as from a sepulchre salutes me.  
When we next meet, this folly may have passed,  
We'll hope—Ha, ha! [*Goes thro' the arras.*]

*Toys.* Assure me but . . . he's gone!

He could not lie ! Then what have I escaped !

I, who have so nigh given up happiness

For ever, to be linked with him and them !

Oh, opportunist of discoveries! I

Their Knight? I utterly renounce them all!

Hark! What, he meets by this the Nuncio? yes

The same hyæna groan-like laughter! Quick—

To Djabal! I am one of them at last,

Those simple-hearted Druses—Anael's tribe!

Djabal! She's mine at last—Djabal, I say!— [*Goes.*]

# THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

## ACT IV.

*Enter DJABAL.*

*Dja.* Let me but slay the Prefect—The end now!  
To-morrow will be time enough to pry  
Into the means I took : suffice, they served,  
Ignoble as they were, to hurl revenge  
True to its object. [*Seeing the robes, &c. disposed.*

... Mine should never so  
Have hurried to accomplishment! Thee, Djabal,  
Far other moods befitted! Calm the Robe  
Should clothe this doom's awarder!

[*Taking the robe.*] Shall I dare  
Assume my nation's Robe? I am at least  
A Druse again, chill Europe's policy  
Drops from me—I dare take the Robe. Why not  
The Tiar? I rule the Druses, and what more  
Betokens it than rule?—yet—yet—

[*Lays down the Tiar.*  
[*Footsteps in the alcove.*] He comes! [*Taking the sword.*

If the sword serves, let the Tiar lie! So, feet  
Clogged with the blood of twenty years can fall  
Thus lightly! Round me, all ye ghosts! He'll lift . . .  
Which arms to push the arras wide?—or both?  
Stab from the neck down to the heart—there stay!  
Near he comes—nearer—the next footstep! Now!

[*As he dashes aside the arras, ANAEL is discovered.*  
Ha! Anael! Nay, my Anael, can it be?  
Heard you the trumpet? I must slay him here,  
And here you ruin all. Why speak you not?  
Anael, the Prefect comes! [*ANAEL screams.*] So late  
to feel

'Tis not a sight for you to look upon?  
A moment's work—but such work! Till you go,  
I must be idle—idle, I risk all!

[*Pointing to her hair.*  
Those locks are well, and you are beauteous thus,

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

But with the dagger 'tis, I have to do!

*An.* With mine!

*Dja.* Blood—Anael?

*An.* Djabal—'tis thy deed!

It must be—I had hoped to claim it mine—

Be worthy thee—but I must needs confess

'Twas not I, but thyself . . . not I have . . . Djabal!

Speak to me!

*Dja.* Oh my punishment!

*An.* Speak to me!

While I can speak—touch me—despite the blood!

When the command passed from thy soul to mine,

I went, fire leading me, muttering of thee,

And the approaching exaltation,—make

One sacrifice! I said,—and he sate there,

Bade me approach; and, as I did approach,

Thy fire with music burst into my brain—

'Twas but a moment's work, thou saidst—perchance

It may have been so! well, it is thy deed!

*Dja.* It is my deed!

*An.* His blood, all this!—this! And . . .

And more—sustain me, Djabal—wait not—now—

Let flash thy glory! Change thyself and me!

It must be! Ere the Druses flock to us!

At least confirm me! Djabal—blood gushed forth—

He was our tyrant—but I looked he'd fall

Prone as asleep—why else is Death called sleep?

Sleep? He bent o'er his breast—'Tis sin, I know,

Punish me, Djabal, but wilt thou let him?

Be it thou that punishest, not he—who creeps

On his red breast—is here—'tis the small groan

Of a child—no worse! Bestow the new life, then!

Too swift it cannot be, too strange, surpassing!

[*Following him up and down.*]

Now! Change us both! Change me and change  
thou!

*Dja.* [*sinks on his knees.*] Thus!

Behold my change! You have done nobly! I!—

*An.* Can Hakeem kneel?

*Dja.* No Hakeem, but mere Djabal!

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

I have spoken falsely, and this woe is come.  
No—hear me ere scorn blasts me! Once and ever,  
The deed is mine . . . Oh think upon the Past!

*An.* [*to herself*]. Did I strike once. or twice, or  
many times?

*Dja.* . . . I came to lead my tribe where, bathed  
in glooms,

Doth Bahumid the Renovator sleep—  
Anael, I saw my tribe—I said, “Without  
A miracle this cannot be”—I said  
“Be there a miracle!”—for I saw you!

*An.* His head lies south the portal!

*Dja.* . . . —Weighed with this  
The general good, how could I choose my own.  
What matter was my purity of soul?  
Little by little I engaged myself—  
Heaven would accept me for its instrument,  
I hoped—I said, Heaven had accepted me!

*An.* Is it this blood breeds dreams in me!—Who  
said

You were not Hakeem? and your miracles—  
The fire that plays innocuous round your form?

[*Again changing her whole manner.*]

Ah, thou wouldst try me—thou art Hakeem still!

*Dja.* Woe—woe! As if the Druses of the Mount  
(Scarce Arabs even there—but here, in the Isle,  
Beneath their former selves) should comprehend  
The subtle lore of Europe! A few secrets  
That would not easily affect the meanest  
Of the crowd there, could wholly subjugate  
The best of our poor tribe! Again that eye?

*An.* [*after a pause springs to his neck.*] Djabal, in  
this there can be no deceit!

Why, Djabal, were you human only,—think,  
Maani is but human, Khalil human,  
Loys is human even—did their words  
Haunt me, their looks pursue me? Shame on you  
So to have tried me! Rather, shame on me  
So to need trying! Could I, with the Prefect  
And the blood, there—could I see only you?

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

—Hang by your neck over this gulf of blood?  
Speak, I am saved! Speak, Djabal! Am I saved?

*[As DJABAL slowly unclasps her arms, and puts  
her silently from him.]*

Hakeem would save me! Thou art Djabal! Crouch!  
Bow to the dust, thou basest of our kind!

The pile of thee, I reared up to the cloud—

Full, midway, of our Fathers' trophied tombs,

Based on the living rock, devoured not by

The unstable desert's jaws of sand,—falls prone!

Fire, music, quenched: and now thou liest there

A ruin, obscene creatures will moan thro'!

—Let us come, Djabal!

*Dja.* Whither come?

*An.* At once—

Lest so it grow intolerable. Come!

Will I not share it with thee? Best at once!

So feel less pain! Let them deride—thy tribe

Now trusting in thee,—Loys shall deride!

Come to them, hand in hand, with me!

*Dja.* Where come?

*An.* Where?—to the Druses thou hast wronged!

Confess,

Now that the end is gained—(I love thee now)

That thou hast so deceived them—(perchance love  
thee

Better than ever!) Come, receive their doom

Of infamy—(Oh, best of all I love thee!

Shame with the man, no triumph with the God,

Be mine!) Come!

*Dja.* Never! more shame yet? and why?

Why? You have called this deed mine—it is mine!

And with it I accept its circumstance.

How can I longer strive with Fate? The Past

Is past—my false life shall henceforth show true—

Hear me: The argosies touch land by this;

They bear us to fresh scenes and happier skies;

What if we reign together?—if we keep

Our secret for the Druses' good?—by means

Of even their superstition, plant in them

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

New life? I learn from Europe: all who seek  
Man's good must awe man, by such means as these.  
We two will be divine to them—we are!  
All great works in this world spring from the ruins  
Of greater projects—ever, on our earth,  
Men block out Babels, to build Babylons.  
I wrest the weapon from your hand! I claim  
The deed! Retire! You have my ring—you bar  
All access to the Nuncio till the forces  
From Venice land!

*An.* Thou wilt feign Hakeem then?

*Dja.* [putting the Tiar of Hakeem on his head.]

And from this moment that I dare ope wide  
Eyes that till now refused to see, begins  
My true dominion! for I know myself,  
And what I am to personate. No word?

[ANAEEL goes.]

'Tis come on me at last! His blood on her—  
What memories will follow that! Her eye,  
Her fierce distorted lip and ploughed black brow—  
Ah, fool! Has Europe then so poorly tamed  
The Syrian blood from out thee? Thou, presume  
To work in this foul earth by means not foul?  
Scheme, as for Heaven,—but, on the earth, be glad  
If a least ray like Heaven's be left thee!

Thus

I shall be calm—in readiness—no way  
Surprised.

[A noise without.]

This should be Khalil and my Druses!  
Venice is come then! Thus I grasp thee, sword!  
Druses, 'tis Hakeem saves you! In! Behold  
Your Prefect!

*Enter LOYS.* DJABAL hides the khandjar in his robe.

*Loys.* Oh, well found, Djabal! but no time for  
words.

You know who waits there? [Pointing to the alcove.]

Well!—and that 'tis there

He meets the Nuncio? Well! Now, a surprise—

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

He there—

*Dja.* I know—

*Lays.* —is now no mortal's lord.

Is absolutely powerless—call him, dead—

He is no longer Prefect—you are Prefect!

Oh, shrink not! I do nothing in the dark,

Nothing unworthy Breton blood, believe!

I understood at once your urgency

That I should leave this isle for Rhodes; I felt

What you were loath to speak—your need of help;

I have fulfilled the task, that earnestness

Imposed on me; have, face to face, confronted

The Prefect in full Chapter, charged on him

The enormities of his long rule; he stood

Mute, offered no defence, no crime denied;

On which, I spoke of you, and of your tribe,

Your faith so like our own, and all you've urged

So oft to me—I spoke, too, of your goodness,

Your patience—brief, I hold henceforth the Isle

In charge, am nominally Prefect,—but you,

You are associated in my rule—

Are the true Prefect! Ay, such faith had they

In my assurance of your loyalty

(For who insults an imbecile old man?)

That we assume the Prefecture this hour!

You gaze at me! Hear greater wonders yet—

I throw down all this fabric I have built!

These Knights, I was prepared to worship . . . but

Of that, another time; what's now to say,

Is—I shall never be a Knight! Oh, Djabal,

Here first I throw all prejudice aside,

And call you brother! I am Druse like you!

My wealth, my friends, my power, are wholly yours,

Your people's, which is now my people—for

There is a maiden of your tribe, I love—

She loves me—Khalil's sister—

*Dja.*

Anael?

*Lays.*

Start you?

Seems what I say, unknighly? Thus it chanced:

When first I came, a novice, to the Isle . . .

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

*Enter one of the NUNCIO'S Guards from the alcove.*

*Guard.* Oh, horrible! Sir Loys! Here is Loys!  
And here— *[Others enter from the alcove.*  
*[Pointing to DJABAL.]* Secure him, bind him—this is he!

*[They surround DJABAL.*

*Loys.* Madmen—what is't you do? Stand from my  
friend,  
And tell me!

*Guard.* Thou canst have no part in this—  
Surely no part—but slay him not! The Nuncio  
Commanded, Slay him not!

*Loys.* Speak, or . . .

*Guard.* The Prefect,  
Lies murdered there by him thou dost embrace.

*Loys.* By Djabal? miserable fools! How Djabal?

*[A Guard lifts DJABAL'S robe: DJABAL flings  
down the khandjar.*

*Loys.* *[after a pause.]* Thou hast received some insult  
worse than all—

Some outrage not to be endured—

*[To the Guards.]* Stand back!

He is my friend—more than my friend! Thou hast  
Slain him upon that provocation!

*Guard.* No!

No provocation! 'Tis a long devised  
Conspiracy: the whole tribe is involved:  
He is their Khalif—'tis on that pretence—  
Their mighty Khalif who died long ago,  
And now is come to life and light again—  
All is just now revealed, I know not how,  
By one of his confederates—who, struck  
With horror at this murder, first apprized  
The Nuncio. As 'twas said, we find this Djabal  
Here where we take him.

*Dja.* *[Aside.]* Who broke faith with me?

*Loys.* *[to DJABAL.]* Hear'st thou? Speak! Till thou  
speak, I keep off these,  
Or die with thee. Deny this story! Thou



## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

A Khalif, an impostor? Thou, my friend,  
Whose tale was of an inoffensive race,  
With . . . but thou know'st—on that tale's truth I  
pledged

My faith before the Chapter: what art thou?

*Dja.* Loys, I am as thou hast heard. All's true!  
No more concealment! As these tell thee, all  
Was long since planned. Our Druses are enough  
To crush this handful: the Venetians land  
Even now in our behalf. Loys, we part here!  
Thou, serving much, would'st fain have served me  
more;

It might not be. I thank thee. As thou hearest,  
We are a separated tribe: farewell!

*Loys.* Oh, where will truth be found now? Canst  
thou so

Belie the Druses? Do they share thy crime?  
Those thou professedst of our Breton stock,  
Are partners with thee? Why, I saw but now  
Khalil, my friend—he spoke with me—no word  
Of this! and Anael—whom I love, and who  
Loves me—she spoke no word of this!

*Dja.* Poor Boy!

Anael, who loves thee? Khalil, fast thy friend?  
We, offsets from a wandering Count of Dreux?  
No—older than the oldest—princelier  
Than Europe's princeliest tribe are we.—Enough  
For thee, that on our simple faith we found  
A monarchy to shame your monarchies  
At their own trick and secret of success.  
The child of this our tribe shall laugh upon  
The palace-step of him whose life ere night  
Is forfeit, as that child shall know, and yet  
Shall laugh there! What, we Druses wait forsooth  
The kind interposition of a boy?

—Can only save ourselves when thou concedest?

—Khalil admire thee? He is my right hand,

My delgeate!—Anael accept thy love?

She is my Bride!

*Loys.* Thy Bride? She one of them?

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

*Dja.* My Bride!

*Loys.* And she retains her glorious eyes!  
She, with those eyes, has shared this miscreant's guilt!  
Ah—who but she directed me to find  
Djabal within the Prefect's chamber? Khalil  
Bade me seek Djabal there, too! All is true!  
What spoke the Prefect worse of them than this?  
Did the Church ill to institute long since  
Perpetual warfare with such serpentry  
As these? Have I desired to shift my part,  
Evade my share in her design? 'Tis well!

*Dja.* Loys, I have wronged thee—but unwittingly;  
I never thought there was in thee a virtue  
That could attach itself to what thou deemest  
A race below thine own. I wronged thee, Loys,  
But that is over: all is over now,  
Save the protection I ensure against  
My people's anger—by their Khalif's side,  
Thou art secure and may'st depart: so, come!

*Loys.* Thy side?—I take protection at thy hand?

*Enter other Guards.*

*Guards.* Fly with him! fly, Sir Loys! 'tis too true!  
And only by his side thou may'st escape!  
The whole tribe is in full revolt—they flock  
About the palace—will be here—on thee—  
And there are twenty of us, we, the Guards  
Of the Nuncio, to withstand them! Even we  
Had stayed to meet our death in ignorance,  
But that one Druse, a single faithful Druse,  
Made known the horror to the Nuncio! Fly!  
The Nuncio stands aghast. At least let us  
Escape their wrath, O Hakeem! We are nought  
In thy tribe's persecution! [*to LOYS.*] Keep by him!  
They hail him Hakeem, their dead Prince, returned—  
He is their God, they shout, and at his beck  
Are life and death!

*Loys.* [*springing at the khandjar DJABAL had thrown  
down, seizes him by the throat.*]

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

Thus by his side am I !

Thus I resume my knighthood and its warfare !  
Thus end thee, miscreant, in thy pride of place !  
Thus art thou caught ! Without, thy dupes may cluster,  
Friends aid thee, foes avoid thee,—thou art Hakeem,  
How say they?—God art thou ! but also here  
Is the least, meanest, youngest the Church calls  
Her servant, and his single arm avails  
To aid her as she lists. I rise, and thou  
Art crushed ! Hordes of thy Druses flock without .  
Here thou hast me, who represent the Cross,  
Honour and Faith, 'gainst Hell, Mahound, and thee !  
Die ! [DJABAL *remains calm.*] Implore my mercy,  
Hakeem, that my scorn

May help me ! Nay—I cannot ply thy trade—  
I am no Druse—no stabber—and thine eye,  
Thy form, are too much as they were—my friend  
Had such ! Speak ! Beg for mercy at my foot !  
[DJABAL *still silent.*

Heaven could not ask so much of me—not, sure,  
So much ! I cannot kill him so !

Thou art  
Strong in thy cause, then ! Dost outbrave us, then ?  
Heard'st thou that one of thine accomplices,  
Thy very people, has accused thee ? Meet  
His charge ! Thou hast not even slain the Prefect  
As thy own vile creed warrants. Meet that Druse—  
Come with me and disprove him—be thou tried  
By him, nor seek appeal—promise me this—  
Or I will do God's office ! What, shalt thou  
Boast of assassins at thy beck, yet Truth  
Want even an executioner ? Consent,  
Or I will strike—look in my face—I will !

Dja. Give me again my khandjar, if thou darest !

[LOYS *gives it.*

Let but one Druse accuse me, and I plunge  
This home. A Druse betray me ? Let us go !  
[*Aside.*] Who has betrayed me ? [Shouts without.  
Hearest thou ? I hear

No plainer now than years ago I heard

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

That shout—but in no dream now! They Return!  
Wilt thou be leader with me, Loys? Well!

### ACT V

*The Uninitiated Druses, covering the stage tumultuously, and speaking together.*

Here flock we, obeying the summons. Lo, Hakeem hath appeared, and the Prefect is dead, and we return to Lebanon! My manufacture of goats' fleece must, I doubt, soon fall away there—Come, old Nasif—link thine arm in mine—we fight, if needs be—Come, what is a great fight-word? “Lebanon?” (My daughter—my daughter!)—But is Khalil to have the office of Hamza?—Nay, rather, if he be wise, the monopoly of henna and cloves—Where is Hakeem?—The only prophet I ever saw, prophesied at Cairo once, in my youth—a little black Copht, dressed all in black too, with a great stripe of yellow cloth flapping down behind him like the back-fin of a water-serpent—Is this he? Biamrallah! Biamreh! HAKEEM!

*Enter the NUNCIO with Guards.*

*Nuncio.* [to his Attendants]. Hold both, the sorcerer and this accomplice

Ye talk of, that accuseth him! And tell

Sir Loys he is mine, the Church's hope:

Bid him approve himself our Knight indeed!

Lo, this black disemboguing of the Isle!

[To the Druses.] Ah, children, what a sight for these old eyes

That kept themselves alive this voyage through

To smile their very last on you! I came

To gather one and all you wandering sheep

Into my fold, as tho' a father came . . .

As tho', in coming, a father should . . .

[To his Guards.] (Ten, twelve

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

—Twelve guards of you, and not an outlet? None?  
The wizards stop each avenue? Keep close!)  
[*To the Druses.*] As if one came to a son's house, I say,  
So did I come—no guard with me—to find . . .  
Alas—alas!

*A Druse.* Who is the old man?

*Another.* Oh, ye are to shout!

Children, he styles you.

*Druses.* Ay, the Prefect's slain!

Glory to the Khalif, our Father!

*Nuncio.* Even so!

I find, (ye prompt aright) your Father slain;  
While most he plotted for your good, that father  
(Alas! how kind, ye never knew)—lies slain!

[*Aside.*] (And Hell's worm gnaw the glozing knave—  
with me,

For being duped by his cajoleries!

Are these the Christians? These the docile crew

My bezants went to make me Bishop o'er?)

[*To his Attendants, who whisper.*] What say ye does  
this wizard style himself?

Hakeem? Biamrallah? The third Fatemite?

What is this jargon? He—the insane Khalif,

Dead near three hundred years ago, come back

In flesh and blood again?

*Druses.* He mutters! Hear ye?

He is blaspheming Hakeem. The old man

Is our dead Prefect's friend! Tear him!

*Nuncio.* Ye dare not!

I stand here with my five-and-seventy years,

The Patriarch's power behind, and God's above me!

Those years have witnessed sin enough; ere now

Misguided men arose against their lords,

And found excuse; but ye, to be enslaved

By sorceries—cheats;—alas! the same tricks, tried

On my poor children in this nook of the earth,

Could triumph,—that have been successively

Exploded, laughed to scorn, all nations thro'—

“*Romaioi, Ioudaioi te kai proselutoi,*

“Cretes and Arabians”—you are duped the last!

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

Said I, refrain from tearing me? I pray ye  
Tear me! Shall I return to tell the Patriarch  
That so much love was wasted—every gift  
Rejected, from his benison I brought,  
Down to the galley-full of bezants, sunk  
An hour since at the harbour's mouth, by that . . .  
That . . . never will I speak his hated name!  
[To his Servants.] What was the name his fellow  
slip-fetter

Called their arch-wizard by? [*they whisper.*] Oh, Djabal  
was't?

*Druses.* But how a sorcerer? false wherein?

*Nuncio.* . . . (Ay, Djabal!)

How false? Ye know not, Djabal has confessed . . .  
Nay, that by tokens found on him we learn . . .  
What I sailed hither solely to divulge—  
How by his spells the demons were allured  
To seize you—not that these be aught save lies  
And mere illusions. Is this clear? I say,  
By measures such as these, he would have led you  
Into a monstrous ruin: follow ye?  
Say, shall ye perish for his sake, my sons?

*Druses.* Hark ye!

*Nuncio.* —Be of one privilege amerced?

No! Infinite the Patriarch's mercies be!

No! With the Patriarch's license, still I bid ye  
Tear him to pieces who misled you! Haste!

*Druses.* The old man's beard shakes, and his eyes are  
white fire! After all, I know nothing of Djabal beyond  
what Karshook says; he knows but what Khalil says;  
who knows just what Djabal says himself—Now, the  
little Copht Prophet, I saw at Cairo in my youth, began  
by promising each bystander three full measures of  
wheat . . .

*Enter KHALIL and the Initiated Druses.*

*Kha.* Venice and her deliverance are at hand!  
Their fleet stands thro' the harbour! Hath he slain  
The Prefect yet? Is Djabal's change come yet?

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

*Nuncio* [to Attendants.] What's this of Venice?  
Who's this boy?

[Attendants *whisper*.] One Khalil?

Djabal's accomplice, Loys called, but now,  
The only Druse, save Djabal's self, to fear?  
[*To the Druses*.] I cannot hear ye with these aged  
ears :

Is it so? Ye would have my troops assist?  
Doth he abet him in his sorceries?  
Down with the cheat, guards, as my children bid!  
[*They spring at KHALIL : as he beats them back*,  
Stay—no more bloodshed—spare deluded youth!  
Whom seek'st thou? (I will teach him)—Whom, my  
child?

Thou knowest not what these know, have just told  
me.

I am an old man, as thou seest—have done  
With earth, and what should move me but the truth?  
Art thou the only fond one of thy tribe?  
'Tis I interpret for thy tribe!—

*Kha.* Oh, this

Is the expected Nuncio! Druses, hear—  
Endure ye this? Unworthy to partake  
The glory Hakeem gains you! While I speak,  
The ships touch land: who makes for Lebanon?  
They'll plant the winged lion in these halls!

*Nuncio.* [*Aside*.] If it be true! Venice?—Oh, never  
true!

Yet, Venice would so gladly thwart our Knights,  
And fain get footing here, so close by Rhodes!  
Oh, to be duped this way!

*Kha.* Ere he appears

To lead you gloriously, repent, I say!

*Nuncio.* [*Aside*.] Oh, any way to stretch the arch-  
wizard stark

Ere the Venetians come! Were he cut off,  
The rest were easily tamed. [*to the Druses*.] He?  
Bring him forth!

Since so you needs will have it, I assent!  
You'd judge him, say you, on the spot? Confound

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

The sorcerer in his very circle? Where's  
Our short black-bearded sallow friend who said  
He'd earn the Patriarch's guerdon by one stab?  
Bring Djabal forth at once!

*Druses.*

Ay, bring him forth!

The Patriarch drives a trade in oil and silk—  
And we're the Patriarch's children—true men, we!  
Where is the glory? Show us all the glory!

*Kha.* You dare not so insult him! What, not  
see . . .

(I tell thee, Nuncio, these are uninstructed,  
Untrusted—they know nothing of our Khalif!)  
—Not see that if he lets a doubt arise  
'Tis but to give yourselves the chance of seeming  
To have some influence in your own Return!  
That all may say they would have trusted him  
Without the all-convincing glory—ay,  
And did! Embrace the occasion, friends! For,  
think—

What merit when his change takes place? But now,  
For your sakes, he should not reveal himself!  
No—could I ask and have, I would not ask  
The change yet!

*Enter DJABAL and LOYS.*

Spite of all, reveal thyself!  
I had said, pardon them for me—for Anael—  
For our sakes pardon these besotted men—  
Ay—for thine own—they hurt not thee! Yet now  
One thought swells in me and keeps down all else!  
This Nuncio couples shame with thee, has called  
Imposture thy whole course, all bitter things  
Has said—he is but an old fretful man!  
Hakeem—nay, I must call thee Hakeem now—  
Reveal thyself! See! Where is Anael?—See!

*Loys.* [to DJA.] Here are thy people! Keep thy word  
to me!

*Dja.* Who of my people hath accused me?

*Nuncio.*

So!



## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

So, this is Djabal, Hakeem, and what not?  
A fit deed, Loys, for thy first Knight's day!  
May it be augury of thy after life!  
Ever be truncheon of the Church as now  
That, Nuncio of the Patriarch, having charge  
Of the Isle here, I claim thee [*turning to Dja.*] as  
these bid me,

Forfeit for murder on thy lawful prince,  
Thou conjurer that peep'st and mutterest!  
Why should I hold thee from their hands? (Spells,  
children?

But hear how I dispose of all his spells!)  
Thou art a Prophet?—would'st entice thy tribe  
Away?—thou workest miracles? (Attend!  
Let him but move me with his spells!) I, Nuncio . .

*Dja.* . . . Which how thou cam'st to be, I say not  
now,

Though I have also been at Stamboul, Luke!  
—Ply thee with spells, forsooth! What need of  
spells?

If Venice, in her Admiral's person, stoop  
To ratify thy compact with her foes,  
The Hospitallers, for this Isle—withdraw  
Her warrant of the deed which reinstates  
My people in their freedom, tricked away  
By him I slew,—refuse to convoy us  
To Lebanon and keep the Isle we leave—  
—Then will be time to try what spells can do.  
Dost thou dispute the Republic's power?

*Nuncio.* ————— *Lo ye!*

He tempts me, too, the wily exorcist!  
No! The renowned Republic was and is  
The Patriarch's friend: 'tis not for courting Venice  
That I—that these implore thy blood of me!  
Lo ye, the subtle miscreant! Ha, so subtle?  
Ye, Druses, hear him! Will ye be deceived?  
How he evades me! Where's the miracle  
He works? I bid him to the proof—fish up  
Your galley-full of bezants that he sunk!  
That were a miracle! One miracle!

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

Enough of trifling, for it chafes my age—  
I am the Nuncio, Druses! I stand forth  
To save you from the good Republic's rage  
When she shall find her fleet was summoned here  
To aid the mummeries of this crafty knave!

[*As the Druses hesitate, his Attendants whisper*  
Ah, well suggested! Why, we hold this while  
One, who, his close confederate till now,  
Confesses Djabal at the last a cheat,  
And every miracle a cheat! Who throws me  
His head? I make three offers, once I offer,—  
And twice . . .

*Dja.* Let who moves perish at my foot!

*Kha.* Thanks, Hakeem, thanks! Oh, Anael, Maani,  
Why tarry they?

*Druses* [*to each other.*] He can! He can! Live fire—  
[*To the NUNCIO.*] (I say he can, old man! Thou know'st  
him not—)

Live fire like that thou seest now in his eyes,  
Plays fawning round him—See! The change begins!  
All the brow lightens as he lifts his arm!  
Look not at me! It was not I!

*Dja.* What Druse  
Accused me, as he saith? I bid each bone  
Crumble within that Druse! None, Loys, none  
Of my own people, as thou saidst, have raised  
A voice against me.

*Nuncio.* [*Aside.*] Venice to come! Death!

*Dja.* [*continuing.*] Confess and go unscathed, how-  
ever false!

Seest thou my Druses, Luke? I would submit  
To thy pure malice did one Druse confess!  
How said I, Loys?

*Nuncio* [*to his Attendants, who whisper.*] Ah, ye  
counsel so?

[*Aloud.*] Bring in the witness, then, who, first of all,  
Disclosed the treason! Now I have thee, wizard!  
Ye hear that? If one speaks, he bids you tear him  
Joint after joint—well then, one does speak! One,  
Befooled by Djabal, even as yourselves,

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

But who hath voluntarily proposed  
To expiate, by confessing thus, the fault  
Of having trusted him.

*[They bring in a veiled Druse.]*

*Loys.* Now Djabal, now!

*Nuncio.* Friend, Djabal fronts you! (Make a ring,  
sons!)—Speak!

Expose this Djabal; what he was, and how;  
The wiles he used, the aims he cherished; all,  
Explicitly as late you spoke to these  
My servants—I absolve and pardon you.

*Loys.* Thou hast the dagger ready, Djabal?

*Dja.* Speak,

Recreant!

*Druses.* Stand back, fool! farther! Suddenly  
You shall see some huge serpent glide from under  
The empty vest—or down will thunder crash!  
Back, Khalil!

*Kha.* I go back? Thus go I back!

*[To AN.]* Unveil! Nay, thou shalt face the Khalif!  
Thus!

*[He tears away ANAEL'S veil: DJABAL folds his arms  
and bows his head: the Druses fall back: LOYS  
springs from the side of DJABAL and the NUNCIO.]*

*Loys.* When she was true—she only of them all!  
True to her eyes—may keep those glorious eyes,  
And now be mine, once again mine! Oh, Anael?  
Dared I think thee a partner in his crime—  
That blood could soil that hand? nay, 'tis mine—

Anael,

—Not mine?—Who offer thee before all these  
My heart, my sword, my name—so thou wilt say  
That Djabal, who affirms thou art his bride,  
Lies—say but that he lies!

*Dja.* "Thou, Anael?"

*Loys.* Nay, Djabal, nay, one chance for me—the  
last!

Thou hast had every other—thou has spoken  
Days, nights, what falsehood listed thee—let me  
Speak first, now; I will speak, now!—

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

*Nuncio.*

Loys, pause!

Thou art the Duke's son, Breton's choicest stock—  
Loys of Dreux—God's sepulchre's first sword—  
This wilt thou spit on, this degrade, this trample  
To earth?

*Loys* [to AN.] Ah, who had foreseen, "One day,  
Loys

"Will stake these gifts against some other good  
"In the whole world?"—I give them thee! I would  
My strong will might bestow real shape on them,  
That I might see, with my own eyes, thy foot  
Tread on their very neck! 'Tis not by gifts  
I put aside this Djabal—we will stand—  
We do stand—see—two men! Djabal, stand forth!  
Who's worth her—I or thou? I—who for Anael  
Kept, purely, uprightly my way, the long  
True way—left thee each by-path—boldly lived  
Without the lies and blood,—or thou, or thou?  
I! Love me, Anael! Leave the blood and him!  
[To DJA.] Now speak—now, quick on this that I have  
said,—

Thou with the blood, speak if thou art a man!

*Dja.* [to AN.] And was it thou betrayedst me? 'Tis  
well!

I have deserved this of thee, and submit:  
Nor 'tis much evil thou inflictest: life  
Ends here. The cedars shall not wave for us—  
For there was crime, and must be punishment.  
See fate! By thee I was seduced—by thee  
I perish—yet do I, can I repent?  
I, with my Arab instinct, thwarted ever  
By my Frank policy,—and, within turn,  
My Frank brain, thwarted by my Arab heart—  
While these remained in equipoise, I lived  
—Nothing; had either been predominant,  
As a Frank schemer or an Arab mystic,  
I had been something;—now, each has destroyed  
The other—and behold, from out their crash,  
A third and better nature rises up—  
My mere Man's-nature! And I yield to it—

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

I love thee—I—who did not love before!

An. Djabal—

Dja. It seemed love, but true love it was not—  
How could I love while thou adoredst me?  
Now thou despisest, art above me so  
Immeasurably—thou, no other, doonest  
My death now—this my steel shall execute  
Thy judgment—I shall feel thy hand in it!  
Oh, luxury to worship, to submit,  
Transcended, doomed to death by thee!

An. My Djabal!

Dja. Dost hesitate? I force thee then! Approach,  
Druses! for I am out of reach of fate;  
No further evil waits me—Speak the truth!  
Hear, Druses, and hear, Nuncio, and hear, Loys!

An. HAKEEM! [She falls dead.

[The Druses scream, grovelling before him.

Ah, Hakeem!—not on me thy wrath!

Biamrallah, pardon—never doubted I!

Ah, dog, how sayest thou?

[They surround and seize the NUNCIO and his  
Guards. LOYS flings himself upon the body of  
ANAEI, on which DJABAL continues to gaze as  
stupefied.

Nuncio. Caitives! Have ye eyes?

Whips, racks, should teach you! What, his fools?  
his dupes?

Leave me! unhand me!

Kha. [approaching DJABAL timidly.] Save her for  
my sake!

She was already thine—she would have shared  
To-day thine exaltation—think! this day  
Her hair was plaited thus because of thee—  
Yes, feel the soft bright hair—feel!

Nuncio [struggling with those who have seized him.]

What, because

His leman dies for him? You think it hard  
To die? Oh, would you were at Rhodes, and choice  
Of deaths should suit you!

Kha. [bending over ANAEI's body.] Just restore her life!

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

So little does it—there—the eyelids tremble!  
'Twas not my breath that made them—and the lips  
Move of themselves—I could restore her life!  
Hakeem, we have forgotten—have presumed  
On our free converse—we are better taught.  
See, I kiss—how I kiss thy garment's hem  
For her! She kisses it—Oh, take her deed  
In mine—Thou dost believe now, Anael?—See  
She smiles! Were her lips open o'er the teeth  
So, when I spoke first? She believes in thee!  
Go not without her to the Cedars, Lord!  
Or leave us both—I cannot go alone!  
I have obeyed thee, if I dare say so—  
Hath Hakeem thus forgot all Djabal knew?  
Thou feelest then my tears fall hot and fast  
Upon thy hand—and yet thou speakest not!  
Ere the Venetian trumpet sound—ere thou  
Exalt thyself, O Hakeem! save her—save her!

*Nuncio.* And the accursed Republic will arrive  
And find me in their toils—dead, very like,  
Under their feet!

What way—not one way yet  
To foil them? None? [*Observing DJABAL's face.*

What ails the Khalif? Ah,  
That ghastly face—a way to foil them yet!  
[*To the Druses.*] Look to your Khalif, Druses! Is that  
face

God Hakeem's? Where is triumph—where is . . . what  
Said he of exaltation—hath he promised  
So much to-day? Why then, exalt thyself!  
Cast off that husk, thy form, set free thy soul  
In splendour! Now, bear witness—here I stand—  
I challenge him exalt himself, and I  
Become, for that, a Druse like all of you!

*The Druses.* Exalt thyself—exalt thyself—O Hakeem!

*Dja.* [*advances.*] I can confess now all from first to  
last.

There is no longer shame for me! I am . . .

[*Here the Venetian trumpet sounds—the Druses shout:*

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

*his eye catches the expression of those about him, and, as the old dream comes back, he is again confident and inspired.*

... Am I *not* Hakeem? And ye would have crawled  
But yesterday within these impure courts  
Where now ye stand erect!—Not grand enough?  
—What more could be conceded to such beasts  
As all of you, so sunk and base as you,  
But a mere man?—A man among such beasts  
Was miracle enough—yet him you doubt,  
Him you forsake, him fain would you destroy—  
With the Venetians at your gate, the Nuncio  
Thus—(see the baffled hypocrite!) and best  
The Prefect there!

*Druses.* No, Hakeem, ever thine!

*Nuncio.* He lies—and twice he lies—and thrice he  
lies!

Exalt thyself, Mahound! Exalt thyself!

*Dja.* Druses! we shall henceforth be far away!  
Out of mere mortal ken—above the Cedars—  
But we shall see ye go, hear ye return,  
Repeopling the old solitudes,—thro' thee,  
My Khalil! Thou art full of me—I fill,  
Thee full—my hands thus fill thee! Yester eve,  
—Nay, but this morn—I deemed thee ignorant  
Of all to do, requiring words of mine  
To teach it—now, thou hast all gifts in one,  
With truth and purity go other gifts!  
All gifts come clustering to that—go, lead  
My People home whate'er betide!

[*Turning to the Druses.*] Ye take  
This Khalil for my delegate? To him  
Bow as to me? He leads to Lebanon—  
Ye follow?

*Druses.* We follow! Now exalt thyself!

*Dja.* [*raises LOYS.*] Then to thee, Loys! How I  
wronged thee, Loys!

—Yet, wronged, no less thou shalt have full revenge,  
Fit for thy noble self, revenge—and thus:

## THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

Thou, loaded with these wrongs, the princely soul,  
The first sword of Christ's sepulchre—thou shalt  
Guard Khalil and my Druses home again!  
Justice, no less—God's justice and no more,  
For those I leave!—to seeking this, devote  
Some few days out of thy Knight's brilliant life,  
And, this obtained them, leave their Lebanon,  
My Druses' blessing in thine ears—(they shall  
Bless thee with blessing sure to have its way)  
—One cedar-blossom in thy Ducal cap,  
One thought of Anael in thy heart—perchance,  
One thought of him who thus, to bid thee speed,  
His last word to the living speaks! This done,  
Resume thy course, and, first amid the first  
In Europe, take my heart along with thee!  
Go boldly, go serenely, go augustly—  
What can withstand thee then?

[*He bends over ANAEL.*] And last to thee!  
Ah, did I dream I was to have this day  
Exalted thee? A vain dream—hast thou not  
Won greater exaltation? What remains  
But press to thee, exalt myself to thee?  
Thus I exalt myself, set free my soul!

[*He stabs himself—as he falls, supported by KHALIL and LOYS, the VENETIANS enter: the ADMIRAL advances.*

*Admiral.* God and St. Mark for Venice! Plant the  
Lion!

[*At the clash of the planted standard, the Druses shout, and move tumultuously forward, LOYS drawing his sword.*

*Dja.* [*leading them a few steps between KHALIL and LOYS.*]  
On to the Mountain. At the Mountain, Druses!  
[*Dies.*



A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON  
A TRAGEDY



# A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

## PERSONS

MILDRED TRESHAM.

GUENDOLEN TRESHAM.

THOROLD, Lord Tresham.

AUSTIN TRESHAM.

HENRY, Earl Mertoun.

GERARD.

Other Retainers of Lord Tresham.

TIME, 17—.

## ACT I

SCENE I. *The interior of a Lodge in LORD TRESHAM'S Park. Many Retainers crowded at the window, supposed to command a view of the entrance to his Mansion. GERARD, the Warrener, sitting alone, his back to a table on which are flaggons, &c.*

1st Ret. Ay—do—push, friends, and then you'll push down me.

—What for? Does any hear a runner's foot,  
Or a steed's trample, or a coach-wheel's cry?  
Is the Earl come or his least poursuivant?  
But there's no breeding in a man of you  
Save Gerard yonder: here's a half-place yet,  
Old Gerard!

Ger. Save your courtesies, my friend.  
Here is my place.

2nd Ret. Now, Gerard, out with it!  
What makes you sullen, this of all the days

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

I' the year? To-day that, young, rich, bountiful,  
Handsome Earl Mertoun, whom alone they match  
With our Lord Tresham thro' the country-side,  
Is coming here in utmost bravery  
To ask our Master's Sister's hand?

*Ger.*

What then?

*2nd Ret.* What then? Why, you she speaks to, if  
she meets

Your worship, smiles on as you hold apart  
The boughs to let her thro' her forest walks,  
You, always favourite for your no-deserts,  
You've heard, these three days, how Earl Mertoun sues  
To lay his heart, and house, and broad lands too,  
At Lady Mildred's feet—and while we squeeze  
Ourselves into a mousehole lest we miss  
One congee of the least page in his train,  
You sit o' one side—"there's the Earl," say I—  
"What then," say you!

*3rd Ret.* I'll wager he has let  
Both swans he tamed for Lady Mildred, swim  
Over the falls and gain the river!

*Ger.*

Ralph,

Is not to-morrow my inspecting-day  
For you and for your hawks?

*4th Ret.*

Let Gerard be!

He's coarse-grained, like his carved black cross-bow  
stock.

Ha, look now, while we squabble with him, look!  
Well done, now—is not this beginning, now,  
To purpose?

*1st Ret.* Our retainers look as fine—

That's comfort! Lord, how Richard holds himself  
With his white staff! Will not a knave behind  
Prick him upright?

*4th Ret.*

He's only bowing, fool!

The Earl's man bent us lower by this much.

*1st Ret.* That's comfort. Here's a very cavalcade!

*3rd Ret.* I don't see wherefore Richard, and his troop  
Of silk and silver varlets there, should find  
Their perfumed selves so indispensable

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

On high days, holy-days! Would it so disgrace  
Our Family, if I, for instance, stood—  
In my right hand a cast of Swedish hawks,  
A leash of greyhounds in my left?—

*Ger.* —With Hugh

The logman for supporter—in his right  
The bill-hook—in his left the brushwood-shears!

*3rd Ret.* Out on you, crab! What next, what next?  
The Earl!

*1st Ret.* Oh, Walter, groom, our horses, do they  
match

The Earl's? Alas, that first pair of the six—  
They paw the ground—Ah, Walter! and that brute  
Just on his haunches by the wheel!

*6th Ret.* Ay—Ay!

You, Philip, are a special hand, I hear,  
At soups and sauces—what's a horse to you?  
D'ye mark that beast they've slid into the midst  
So cunningly?—then, Philip, mark this further;  
No leg has he to stand on!

*1st Ret.* No? That's comfort.

*2nd Ret.* Peace, Cook! The Earl descends.—Well,  
Gerard, see

The Earl at least! Come, there's a proper man,  
I hope! Why, Ralph, no falcon, Pole or Swede,  
Has got a starrier eye—

*3rd Ret.* His eyes are blue—

But leave my hawks alone!

*4th Ret.* So young, and yet

So tall and shapely!

*5th Ret.* Here's Lord Tresham's self!

There now—there's what a nobleman should be!  
He's older, graver, loftier, he's more like  
A House's Head!

*2nd Ret.* But you'd not have a boy

—And what's the Earl beside?—possess too soon  
That stateliness?

*1st Ret.* Our Master takes his hand—

Richard and his white staff are on the move—  
Back fall our people—(tsh!—there's Timothy

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

Sure to get tangled in his ribbon-ties—

And Peter's cursed rosette's a-coming off!)

—At last I see our Lord's back and his friend's—

And the whole beautiful bright company

Close round them—in they go! [*Jumping down from the window-bench, and making for the table and its jugs, &c.*]

Good health, long life,

Great joy to our Lord Tresham and his House!

6th Ret. My father drove his father first to court,  
After his marriage-day—ay, did he!

2nd Ret.

God bless

Lord Tresham, Lady Mildred, and the Earl!

Here, Gerard, reach your beaker!

Ger.

Drink, my boys:

Don't mind me—all's not right about me—drink!

2nd Ret. [*Aside.*] He's vexed, now, that he let the  
show escape!

[*To GER.*] Remember that the Earl returns this way—

Ger. That way?

2nd Ret.

Just so.

Ger.

Then my way's here. [*Goes.*]

2nd Ret.

Old Gerard

Will die soon—mind, I said it! He was used

To care about the pitifullest thing

That touched the House's honour, not an eye

But his could see wherein—and on a cause

Of scarce a quarter this importance, Gerard

Fairly had fretted flesh and bone away

In cares that this was right, nor that was wrong,

Such a point decorous, and such by rule—

(He knew such niceties, no herald more)

And now—you see his humour: die he will!

2nd Ret. God help him! Who's for the great  
servants'-hall

To hear what's going on inside? They'd follow  
Lord Tresham into the saloon.

3rd Ret.

I!—

4th Ret.

I!—

Leave Frank alone for catching, at the door,  
Some hint of how the parley goes inside!

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

Prosperity to the great House once more—  
Here's the last drop!

*1st Ret.*

Have at you! Boys, hurrah!

### SCENE II. *A Saloon in the Mansion.*

*Enter* Lord TRESHAM, Lord MERTOUN; AUSTIN, and  
GUENDOLEN.

*Tresh.* I welcome you, Lord Mertoun, yet once more,  
To this ancestral roof of mine. Your name  
—Noble among the noblest in itself,  
Yet taking in your person, fame avers,  
New price and lustre,—(as that gem you wear,  
Transmitted from a hundred knightly breasts,  
Fresh chased and set and fixed by its last lord,  
Seems to re-kindle at the core)—your name  
Would win you welcome!—

*Mer.* Thanks!

*Tresh.* —But add to that,  
The worthiness and grace and dignity  
Of your proposal for uniting both  
Our Houses even closer than respect  
Unites them now—add these, and you must grant  
One favor more, nor that the least,—to think  
The welcome I should give;—'tis given! My lord,  
My only brother, Austin—he's the King's.  
Our cousin, Lady Guendolen—betrothed  
To Austin: all are yours.

*Mer.* I thank you—less  
For the expressed commendings which your seal,  
And only that, authenticates—forbids  
My putting from me . . . to my heart I take  
Your praise . . . but praise less claims my gratitude,  
Than the indulgent insight it implies  
Of what must needs be uppermost with one  
Who comes, like me, with the bare leave to ask,  
In weighed and measured unimpassioned words,  
A gift, which, if as calmly 'tis denied,  
He must withdraw, content upon his cheek,

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

Despair within his soul:—that I dare ask  
Firmly, near boldly, near with confidence  
That gift, I have to thank you.—Yes, Lord Tresham,  
I love your sister—as you'd have one love  
That lady . . . oh more, more I love her! Wealth,  
Rank, all the world thinks *me*, they're yours, you  
know,

To hold or part with, at your choice—but grant  
My true self, *me* without a rood of land,  
A piece of gold, a name of yesterday,  
Grant me that lady, and you . . . Death or life?

*Guen.* [apart to *Aus.*] Why, this *is* loving, Austin!

*Aus.* . . . He's so young!

*Guen.* Young? Old enough, I think, to half surmise  
He never had obtained an entrance here,  
Were all this fear and trembling needed.

*Aus.* . . . Hush!

He reddens.

*Guen.* Mark him, Austin; that's true love!  
Ours must begin again.

*Tresh.* . . . We'll sit, my lord.  
Ever with best desert goes diffidence.  
I may speak plainly nor be misconceived.  
That I am wholly satisfied with you  
On this occasion, when a falcon's eye  
Were dull compared with mine to search out faults,  
Is somewhat. Mildred's hand is hers to give  
Or to refuse.

*Mer.* But you, you grant my suit?  
I have your word if hers?

*Tresh.* . . . My best of words  
If hers encourage you. I trust it will.  
Have you seen Lady Mildred, by the way?

*Mer.* I . . . I . . . our two demesnes, remember,  
touch—

i have been used to wander carelessly  
After my stricken game—the heron roused  
Deep in my woods, has trailed its broken wing  
Thro' thicks and glades a mile in yours,—or else  
Some eyass ill-reclaimed has taken flight



## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

And lured me after her from tree to tree,  
I marked not whither . . . I have come upon  
The Lady's wondrous beauty unaware,  
And—and then . . . I have seen her.

*Guen.* [*aside to AUS.*]                      Note that mode  
Of faltering out that when a lady passed  
He, having eyes, did see her! You had said—  
"On such a day I scanned her, head to foot;  
"Observed a red, where red should not have been,  
"Outside her elbow; but was pleased enough  
"Upon the whole." Let such irreverent talk  
Be lessoned for the future!

*Tresh.*                      What's to say  
May be said briefly. She has never known  
A mother's care; I stand for father too.  
Her beauty is not strange to you, it seems—  
You cannot know the good and tender heart,  
Its girl's trust and its woman's constancy,  
How pure yet passionate, how calm yet kind,  
How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet free  
As light where friends are—how embued with lore  
The world most prizes, yet the simplest, yet  
The . . . one might know I talked of Mildred—thus  
We brothers talk!

*Mer.*                      I thank you.

*Tresh.*                      In a word,  
Control's not for this lady; but her wish  
To please me outstrips in its subtlety  
My power of being pleased—herself creates  
The want she means to satisfy. My heart  
Prefers your suit to her as 'twere its own.  
Can I say more?

*Mer.*                      No more—thanks, thanks—no more!

*Tresh.* This matter then discussed . . .

*Mer.*                      . . . We'll waste no breath  
On aught less precious—I'm beneath the roof  
That holds her: while I thought of that, my speech  
To you would wander—as it must not do,  
Since as you favour me I stand or fall.  
I pray you suffer that I take my leave!

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

*Tresh.* With less regret 'tis suffered, that again  
We meet, I hope, so shortly.

*Mer.* We? again?—  
Ah yes, forgive me—when shall . . . you will crown  
Your goodness by forthwith apprising me  
When . . . if . . . the Lady will appoint a day  
For me to wait on you—and her.

*Tresh.* So soon  
As I am made acquainted with her thoughts  
On your proposal—howsoe'er they lean—  
A messenger shall bring you the result.

*Mer.* You cannot bind me more to you, my lord.  
Farewell till we renew . . . I trust, renew  
A converse ne'er to disunite again.

*Tresh.* So may it prove!

*Mer.* You, Lady, you, Sir, take  
My humble salutation!

*Guen. & Aus.* Thanks!

*Tresh.* Within there!

[*Servants enter.* TRESHAM conducts MERTOUN to the  
door. Meantime AUSTIN remarks,

Well,

Here I have an advantage of the Earl,  
Confess now! I'd not think that all was safe  
Because my lady's brother stood my friend.  
Why, he makes sure of her—"do you say, yes—  
"She'll not say, no"—what comes it to beside?  
I should have prayed the brother, "speak this speech,  
"For Heaven's sake urge this on her—put in this—  
"Forget not, as you'd save me, t'other thing,—  
"Then set down what she says, and how she looks,  
"And if she smiles," and (in an under breath)  
"Only let her accept me, and do you  
"And all the world refuse me, if you dare!"

*Guen.* That way you'd take, friend Austin? What  
a shame

I was your cousin, tamely from the first  
Your bride, and all this fervour's run to waste!  
Do you know you speak sensibly to-day?  
The Earl's a fool.

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

*Aus.* Here's Thorold. Tell him so!

*Tresh.* [returning.] Now, voices, voices! 'St! the lady's first!

How seems he?—seems he not . . . come, faith give fraud

The mercy-stroke whenever they engage!

Down with fraud—up with faith! How seems the Earl?

A name! a blazon! if you knew their worth,

As you will never! come—the Earl?

*Guen.* He's young.

*Tresh.* What's she? an infant save in heart and brain

Young! Mildred is fourteen, remark! And you . . . Austin, how old is she?

*Guen.* There's tact for you!

I meant that being young was good excuse

If one should tax him . . .

*Tresh.* Well?

*Guen.* —With lacking wit.

*Tresh.* He lacked wit? Where might he lack wit, so please you?

*Guen.* In standing straiter than the steward's rod And making you the tiresomest harangues,

Instead of slipping over to my side

And softly whispering in my ear, "Sweet lady,

"Your cousin there will do me detriment

"He little dreams of—he's absorbed, I see,

"In my old name and fame—be sure he'll leave

"My Mildred, when his best account of me

"Is ended, in full confidence I wear

"My grandsire's periwig down either cheek.

"I'm lost unless your gentleness vouchsafes" . . .

*Tresh.* . . . "To give a best of best accounts, yourself,

"Of me and my demerits." You are right!

He should have said what now I say for him.

You golden creature, will you help us all?

Here's Austin means to vouch for much, but you

—You are . . . what Austin only knows! Come up,

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

All three of us—she's in the Library  
No doubt, for the day's wearing fast. Precede!

*Guen.* Austin, how we must—!

*Tresh.* Must what? Must speak truth,  
Malignant tongue! Detect one fault in him!  
I challenge you!

*Guen.* Witchcraft's a fault in him,  
For you're bewitched.

*Tresh.* What's urgent we obtain  
Is, that she soon receive him—say, to-morrow—  
Next day at farthest.

*Guen.* Ne'er instruct me!

*Tresh.* Come!

—He's out of your good graces since, forsooth,  
He stood not as he'd carry us by storm  
With his perfections! You're for the composed,  
Manly, assured, becoming confidence!  
—Get her to say, "to-morrow," and I'll give you . . .  
I'll give you back Urganda, to be spoiled  
With petting and snail-paces. Will you? Come!

SCENE III. MILDRED'S *Chamber.* *A painted window  
overlooks the park.* MILDRED and GUENDOLEN.

*Guen.* Now, Mildred, spare those pains. I have not  
left

Our talkers in the Library, and climbed  
The wearisome ascent to this your bower  
In company with you,—I have not dared . . .  
Nay, worked such prodigies as sparing you  
Lord Mertoun's pedigree before the flood,  
Which Thorold seemed in very act to tell—  
—Or bringing Austin to pluck up that most  
Firm-rooted heresy—your suitor's eyes,  
He would maintain, were gray instead of blue—  
I think I brought him to contrition!—Well,  
I have not done such things, (all to deserve  
A minute's quiet cousin's—talk with you,)  
To be dismissed so coolly!

*Mil.*

*Guendolen,*

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

What have I done . . . what could suggest . . .

*Guen.*

There, there!

Do I not comprehend you'd be alone  
To throw those testimonies in a heap,  
Thorold's enlargings, Austin's brevities,  
With that poor, silly, heartless Guendolen's  
Ill-timed, misplaced, attempted smartnesses—  
And sift their sense out? now, I come to spare you  
Nearly a whole night's labour. Ask and have!  
Demand, be answered! Lack I ears and eyes?  
Am I perplexed which side of the rock-table  
The Conqueror dined on when he landed first,  
Lord Mertoun's ancestor was bidden take—  
The bow-hand or the arrow-hand's great meed?  
Mildred, the Earl has soft blue eyes!

*Mil.*

My brother—

Did he . . . you said that he received him well?

*Guen.* If I said only "well" I said not much—  
Oh, stay—which brother?

*Mil.*

Thorold! who—who else?

*Guen.* Thorold (a secret) is too proud by half,—  
Nay, hear me out—with us he's even gentler  
Than we are with our birds. Of this great House  
The least retainer that e'er caught his glance  
Would die for him, real dying—no mere talk:  
And in the world, the court, if men would cite  
The perfect spirit of honour, Thorold's name  
Rises of its clear nature to their lips:  
But he should take men's homage, trust in it,  
And care no more about what drew it down.  
He has desert, and that, acknowledgment;  
Is he content?

*Mil.*

You wrong him, Guendolen.

*Guen.* He's proud, confess; so proud with brooding  
o'er

The light of his interminable line,  
An ancestry with men all paladins,  
And women all . . .

*Mil.* Dear Guendolen, 'tis late!

When yonder purple pane the climbing moon

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

Pierces, I know 'tis midnight.

*Guen.* Well, that Thorold  
Should rise up from such musings, and receive  
One come audaciously to graft himself  
Into this peerless stock, yet find no flaw,  
No slightest spot in such an one. . . .

*Mil.* Who finds  
A spot in Mertoun?

*Guen.* Not your brother ; therefore,  
Not the whole world.

*Mil.* I'm weary, Guendolen.—  
Bear with me !

*Guen.* I am foolish.

*Mil.* Oh, no, kind—  
But I would rest.

*Guen.* Good night and rest to you.  
I said how gracefully his mantle lay  
Beneath the rings of his light hair?

*Mil.* Brown hair !

*Guen.* Brown? why it *is* brown—how could you  
know that?

*Mil.* How? did not you—Oh Austin 'twas, declared  
His hair was light, not brown—my head!—and, look,  
The moon-beam purpling the dark chamber! Sweet,  
Good night !

*Guen.* Forgive me—sleep the soundlier for me !  
[*Going, she turns suddenly.*  
Mildred !

Perdition ! all's discovered.—Thorold finds  
—That the Earl's greatest of all grandmothers  
Was grander daughter still—to that fair dame  
Whose garter slipped down at the famous dance !  
[*Goes.*

*Mil.* Is she—can she be really gone at last?  
My heart—I shall not reach the window ! Needs  
Must I have sinned much, so to suffer !

[*She lifts the small lamp which is suspended before  
the Virgin's image in the window, and places it  
by the purple pane.*]  
There !

[*She returns to the seat in front.*

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

Mildred and Mertoun! Mildred, with consent  
Of all the world and Thorold,—Mertoun's bride  
Too late! 'Tis sweet to think of, sweeter still  
To hope for, that this blessed end soothes up  
The curse of the beginning; but I know  
It comes too late—'twill sweetest be of all  
To dream my soul away and die upon!

[*A noise without.*

The voice! Oh! why, why glided sin the snake  
Into the Paradise Heaven meant us both?

[*The window opens softly.—A low voice sings.*

There's a woman like a dew-drop, she's so purer than the purest;  
And her noble heart's the noblest, yes, and her sure faith's the surest:  
And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on depth of lustre  
Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier than the wild-grape cluster,  
Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her neck's rose-misted marble:  
Then her voice's music . . . call it the well's bubbling, the bird's warble!

[*A figure wrapped in a mantle appears at the window.*

And this woman says, "My days were sunless and my nights were  
moonless,  
"Parched the pleasant April herbage, and the lark's heart's outbreak  
tuneless,  
"If you loved me not!" And I who—(ah, for words of flame!) adore her!  
Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate palpably before her—

[*He enters—approaches her seat, and bends over her.*

I may enter at her portal soon, as now her lattice takes me,  
And by noontide as by midnight make her mine, as hers she makes me!

[*The Earl throws off his slouched hat and long cloak.*

My very heart sings, so I sing, beloved!

*Mil.* Sit, Henry—do not take my hand.

*Mer.* 'Tis mine!

The meeting that appalled us both so much  
Is ended.

*Mil.* What begins now?

*Mer.* Happiness

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

Such as the world contains not.

*Mil.*

That is it.

Our happiness would, as you say, exceed  
The whole world's best of blisses: we—do we  
Deserve that? Utter to your soul, what mine  
Long since, beloved, has grown used to hear,  
Like a death-knell, so much regarded once,  
And so familiar now; this will not be!

*Mer.* Oh, Mildred, have I met your brother's face,  
Compelled myself—if not to speak untruth,  
Yet to disguise, to shun, to put aside  
The truth, as what had e'er prevailed on me  
Save you, to venture? Have I gained at last  
Your brother, the one scarer of your dreams,  
And waking thoughts' sole apprehension too?  
Does a new life, like a young sunrise, break  
On the strange unrest of our night, confused  
With rain and stormy flaw—and will you see  
No dripping blossoms, no fire-tinted drops  
On each live spray, no vapour steaming up,  
And no expressless glory in the east?  
When I am by you, to be ever by you,  
When I have won you and may worship you,  
Oh, Mildred, can you say "this will not be?"

*Mil.* Sin has surprised us; so will punishment.

*Mer.* No—me alone, who sinned alone!

*Mil.*

The night

You likened our past life to—was it storm  
Throughout to you then, Henry?

*Mer.*

Of your life

I spoke—what am I, what my life, to waste  
A thought about when you are by me?—you  
It was, I said my folly called the storm  
And pulled the night upon.—'Twas day with me—  
Perpetual dawn with me.

*Mil.*

Come what, come will,

You have been happy—take my hand!

*Mer.* [after a pause.]

How good

Your brother is! I figured him a cold—  
Shall I say, haughty man?



## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

*Mil.*

They told me all.

I know all.

*Mer.*

It will soon be over.

*Mil.*

Over?

Oh, what is over? what must I live thro'  
And say, "'tis over?" Is our meeting over?  
Have I received in presence of them all  
The partner of my guilty love,—with brow  
Trying to seem a maiden's brow—with lips  
Which make believe that when they strive to form  
Replies to you and tremble as they strive,  
It is the nearest ever they approached  
A stranger's . . . Henry, yours that stranger's . . . lip—  
With cheek that looks a virgin's, and that is . . .  
Ah, God! some prodigy of thine will stop  
This planned piece of deliberate wickedness  
In its birth even—some fierce leprous spot  
Will mar the brow's dissimulating—I  
Shall murmur no smooth speeches got by heart,  
But, frenzied, pour forth all our woeful story,  
The love, the shame, and the despair—with them  
Round me aghast as men round some cursed fount  
That should spirt water, and spouts blood. I'll not  
. . . Henry, you do not wish that I should draw  
This vengeance down? I'll not affect a grace  
That's gone from me—gone once, and gone for ever!

*Mer.* Mildred, my honor is your own. I'll share  
Disgrace I cannot suffer by myself.

A word informs your brother I retract  
This morning's offer; time will yet bring forth  
Some better way of saving both of us.

*Mil.* I'll meet their faces, Mertoun!

*Mer.*

When? to-morrow?

Get done with it!

*Mil.*

Oh, Henry, not to-morrow!  
Next day! I never shall prepare my words  
And looks and gestures sooner!—How you must  
Despise me!

*Mer.*

Mildred, break it if you choose,  
A heart the love of you uplifted—still

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

Uplifts, thro' this protracted agony,  
To Heaven! but, Mildred, answer me,—first pace  
The chamber with me—once again—now, say  
Calmly the part, the . . . what it is of me  
You see contempt (for you did say contempt)  
—Contempt for you in! I would pluck it off  
And cast it from me!—but no—no, you'll not  
Repeat that?—will you, Mildred, repeat that?

*Mil.* Dear Henry—

*Mer.* I was scarce a boy—e'en now  
What am I more? And you were infantine  
When first I met you—why, your hair fell loose  
On either side!—my fool's cheek reddens now  
Only in the recalling how it burned  
That morn to see the shape of many a dream  
—You know we boys are prodigal of charms  
To her we dream of—I had heard of one,  
Had dreamed of her, and I was close to her,  
Might speak to her, might live and die her own,  
Who knew?—I spoke—Oh, Mildred, feel you not  
That now, while I remember every glance  
Of yours, each word of yours, with power to test  
And weigh them in the diamond scales of Pride,  
Resolved the treasure of a first and last  
Heart's love shall have been bartered at its worth,  
—That now I think upon your purity  
And utter ignorance of guilt—your own  
Or other's guilt—the girlish undisguised  
Delight at a strange novel prize—(I talk  
A silly language, but interpret, you!)  
If I, with fancy at its full, and reason  
Scarce in its germ, enjoined you secrecy,  
If you had pity on my passion, pity  
On my protested sickness of the soul  
To sit beside you, hear you breathe, and watch  
Your eyelids and the eyes beneath—if you  
Accorded gifts and knew not they were gifts—  
If I grew mad at last with enterprise  
And must behold my beauty in her bower  
Or perish—(I was ignorant of even

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

My own desires—what then were you?) if sorrow—  
Sin—if the end came—must I now renounce  
My reason, blind myself to light, say truth  
Is false and lie to God and my own soul?  
Contempt were all of this!

*Mil.* Do you believe . . .  
Or, Henry, I'd not wrong you—you believe  
That I was ignorant. I scarce grieve o'er  
The past! We'll love on—you will love me still!

*Mer.* Oh, to love less what one has injured! Dove,  
Whose pinion I have rashly hurt, my breast—  
Shall my heart's warmth not nurse thee into strength?  
Flower I have crushed, shall I not care for thee?  
Bloom o'er my crest my fight-mark and device!  
Mildred, I love you and you love me!

*Mil.* Go!  
Be that your last word. I shall sleep to-night.

*Mer.* This is not our last meeting?

*Mil.* One night more.

*Mer.* And then—think, then!

*Mil.* Then, no sweet courtship-days,  
No dawning consciousness of love for us,  
No strange and palpitating births of sense  
From words and looks, no innocent fears and hopes,  
Reserves and confidences: morning's over!

*Mer.* How else should love's perfected noontide  
follow?

All the dawn promised shall the day perform.

*Mil.* So may it be! but—

You are cautious, love?  
Are sure that unobserved you scaled the walls?

*Mer.* Oh, trust me! Then our final meeting's fixed?  
To-morrow night?

*Mil.* Farewell! Stay, Henry . . . wherefore?  
His foot is on the yew-tree bough—the turf  
Receives him—now the moonlight as he runs  
Embraces him—but he must go—is gone—  
Ah, once again he turns—thanks, thanks, my love!  
He's gone—Oh, I'll believe him every word!  
I was so young—I loved him so—I had

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

No mother—God forgot me—and I fell.  
There may be pardon yet—all's doubt beyond.  
Surely the bitterness of death is past!

### ACT II

SCENE. *The Library.*

*Enter LORD TRESHAM hastily.*

This way—In, Gerard, quick!

[*As GERARD enters, TRESHAM secures the door.*

Now speak! or, wait—

I'll bid you speak directly.

[*Seats himself.*

Now repeat

Firmly and circumstantially the tale

You've just now told me; it eludes me; either

I did not listen, or the half is gone

Away from me—How long have you lived here?

Here in my house, your father kept our woods

Before you?

*Ger.* —As his father did, my lord.

I have been eating sixty years, almost,

Your bread.

*Tresh.* Yes, yes—You ever were of all

The servants in my father's house, I know,

The trusted one. You'll speak the truth.

*Ger.*

I'll speak

God's truth: night after night . . .

*Tresh.*

Since when?

*Ger.*

At least

A month—each midnight has some man access

To Lady Mildred's chamber.

*Tresh.*

Tush, "access"—

No wide words like "access" to me!

*Ger.*

He runs

Along the woodside, crosses to the south,

Takes the left tree that ends the avenue . . .

*Tresh.* The last great yew-tree?

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

*Ger.* You might stand upon  
The main boughs like a platform . . . Then he . . .

*Tresh.* Quick!

*Ger.* . . . Climbs up, and, where they lessen at the  
top,

—I cannot see distinctly, but he throws,  
I think—for this I do not vouch—a line  
That reaches to the Lady's casement—

*Tresh.* —Which

He enters not! Gerard—some wretched fool  
Dares pry into my sister's privacy!  
When such are young, it seems a precious thing  
To have approached,—to merely have approached,  
Got sight of, the abode of her they set  
Their frantic thoughts upon! He does not enter?  
Gerard?

*Ger.* There is a lamp that's full in the midst,  
Under a red square in the painted glass  
Of Lady Mildred's . . .

*Tresh.* Leave that name out! Well?  
That lamp?

*Ger.* —Is moved at midnight higher up  
To one pane—a small dark-blue pane—he waits  
For that among the boughs; at sight of that,  
I see him, plain as I see you, my lord,  
Open the Lady's casement, enter there . . .

*Tresh.* —And stay?

*Ger.* An hour, two hours.

*Tresh.* And this you saw  
Once?—twice?—quick!

*Ger.* Twenty times.

*Tresh.* And what brings you  
Under the yew-trees?

*Ger.* The first night I left  
My range so far, to track the stranger stag  
That broke the pale, I saw the man.

*Tresh.* Yet sent  
No cross-bow shaft thro' the marauder?

*Ger.* But  
He came, my lord, the first time he was seen,

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

In a great moonlight, light as any day,  
From Lady Mildred's chamber.

*Tresh.* [after a pause.] You have no cause—  
—Who could have cause to do my sister wrong?

*Ger.* Oh, my lord, only once—let me this once  
Speak what is on my mind! Since first I noted  
All this, I've groaned as if a fiery net  
Plucked me this way and that—fire, if I turned  
To her, fire if I turned to you, and fire,  
If down I flung myself and strove to die.  
The lady could not have been seven years old  
When I was trusted to conduct her safe  
Thro' the deer-herd to stroke the snow-white fawn  
I brought to eat bread from her tiny hand  
Within a month. She ever had a smile  
To greet me with—she . . . if it could undo  
What's done to lop each limb from off this trunk . . .  
All that is foolish talk, not fit for you—  
I mean, I could not speak and bring her hurt  
For Heaven's compelling: but when I was fixed  
To hold my peace, each morsel of your food  
Eaten beneath your roof, my birth-place too,  
Choked me. I wish I had grown mad in doubts  
What it behoved me do. This morn it seemed  
Either I must confess to you, or die:  
Now it is done, I seem the vilest worm  
That crawls, to have betrayed my Lady!

*Tresh.* No—  
No—Gerard!

*Ger.* Let me go!

*Tresh.* A man, you say—  
What man? Young? Not a vulgar hind? What  
dress?

*Ger.* A slouched hat and a large dark foreign cloak  
Wraps his whole form: even his face is hid;  
But I should judge him young; no hind, be sure!

*Tresh.* Why?

*Ger.* He is ever armed: his sword projects  
Beneath the cloak.

*Tresh.* Gerard,—I will not say

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

No word, no breath of this!

*Ger.*

Thanks, thanks, my lord!

*[Goes.]*

*TRESHAM paces the room. After a pause,*

Oh, thought's absurd!—as with some monstrous fact  
That, when ill thoughts beset us, seems to give  
Merciful God that made the sun and stars  
The waters and the green delights of earth,  
The lie! I apprehend the monstrous fact—  
Yet know the Maker of all worlds is good,  
And yield my reason up, inadequate  
To reconcile what yet I do behold—  
Blasting my sense! There's cheerful day outside—  
This is my library—and this the chair  
My father used to sit in carelessly,  
After his soldier-fashion, while I stood  
Between his knees to question him—and here,  
Gerard our gray retainer,—as he says,  
Fed with our food from sire to son an age,—  
Has told a story—I am to believe!  
That Mildred . . . oh no, no! both tales are true,  
Her pure cheek's story and the forester's!  
Would she, or could she, err—much less, confound  
All guilts of treachery, of craft, of . . . Heaven  
Keep me within its hand!—I will sit here  
Until thought settles and I see my course.  
Avert, oh God, only this woe from me!

*[As he sinks his head between his arms on the table,*

*GUENDOLEN'S voice is heard at the door.*

Lord Tresham! *[She knocks.]* Is Lord Tresham there?

*[TRESHAM, hastily turning, pulls down the first book above him and opens it.]*

*Tresh.*

Come in! *[She enters.]*

Ah, Guendolen—good morning.

*Guen.*

Nothing more?

*Tresh.* What should I say more?

*Guen.*

Pleasant question! more?

This more! Did I besiege poor Mildred's brain  
Last night till close on morning with "the Earl"—  
"The Earl"—whose worth did I asseverate

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

Till I am very fain to hope that . . . Thorold,  
What is all this? You are not well!

*Tresh.*

Who, I?

You laugh at me.

*Guen.*

Has what I'm fain to hope  
Arrived, then? Does that huge tome show some blot  
In the Earl's 'scutcheon come no longer back  
Than Arthur's time?

*Tresh.*

When left you Mildred's chamber?

*Guen.* Oh late enough, I told you! The main thing  
To ask is, how I left her chamber,—sure,  
Content yourself, she'll grant this paragon  
Of Earls no such ungracious . . .

*Tresh.*

Send her here!

*Guen.* Thorold?

*Tresh.*

I mean—acquaint her, Guendolen,—  
—But mildly!

*Guen.*

Mildly?

*Tresh.*

Ah, you guess'd aright!  
I am not well—there is no hiding it.  
But tell her I would see her at her leisure—  
That is, at once! here in the Library!  
The passage in that old Italian book  
We hunted for so long is found, say,—found—  
And if I let it slip again . . . you see,  
That she must come—and instantly!

*Guen.*

I'll die

Piecemeal, record that, if there have not gloomed  
Some blot i' the 'scutcheon!

*Tresh.*

Go! or, Guendolen,

Be you at call,—with Austin, if you choose,—  
In the adjoining gallery—There, go! [*GUENDOLEN goes.*]  
Another lesson to me! you might bid  
A child disguise his heart's sore, and conduct  
Some sly investigation point by point  
With a smooth brow, as well as bid me catch  
The inquisitorial cleverness some praise!  
If you had told me yesterday, "There's one  
"You needs must circumvent and practise with  
"Entrap by policies, if you would worm



## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

"The truth out—and that one is—Mildred!" There—  
There—reasoning is thrown away on it!  
Prove she's unchaste . . . why you may after prove  
That she's a poisoner, traitress, what you will!  
Where I can comprehend nought, nought's to say,  
Or do, or think! Force on me but the first  
Abomination,—then outpour all plagues,  
And I shall ne'er make count of them!

*Enter MILDRED.*

*Mil.*

What book

Is it I wanted, Thorold? Guendolen  
Thought you were pale—you are not pale! That book?  
That's Latin surely!

*Tresh.*

Mildred—here's a line—

(Don't lean on me—I'll English it for you)  
"Love conquers all things." What love conquers them?  
What love should you esteem—best love?

*Mil.*

True love.

*Tresh.* I mean, and should have said, whose love is  
best

Of all that love or that profess to love?

*Mil.* The list's so long—there's father's, mother's,  
husband's . . .

*Tresh.* Mildred, I do believe a brother's love

For a sole sister must exceed them all!

For see now, only see! there's no alloy

Of earth that creeps into the perfect'st gold

Of other loves—no gratitude to claim;

You never gave her life—not even aught

That keeps life—never tended her, instructed,

Enriched her—so your love can claim no right

O'er hers save pure love's claim—that's what I call

Freedom from earthliness. You'll never hope

To be such friends, for instance, she and you,

As when you hunted cowslips in the woods,

Or played together in the meadow hay.

Oh yes—with age, respect comes, and your worth

Is felt, there's growing sympathy of tastes,

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

There's ripened friendship, there's confirmed esteem,  
—Much head these make against the new-comer!  
The startling apparition—the strange youth—  
Whom one half-hour's conversing with, or, say,  
Mere gazing at, shall change (beyond all change  
This Ovid ever sang about!) your soul  
. . . *Her* soul, that is,—the sister's soul! With her  
'Twas winter yesterday; now, all is warmth,  
The green leaf's springing and the turtle's voice,  
“Arise and come away!” Come whither?—far  
Enough from the esteem, respect, and all  
The brother's somewhat insignificant  
Array of rights! all which he knows before—  
Has calculated on so long ago!  
I think such love, (apart from yours and mine,)  
Contented with its little term of life,  
Intending to retire betimes, aware  
How soon the back-ground must be place for it,  
I think, am sure, a brother's love exceeds  
All the world's loves in its unworldliness.

*Mil.* What is this for?

*Tresh.*

This, Mildred, is it for!

Oh, no, I cannot go to it so soon!  
That's one of many points my haste left out—  
Each day, each hour throws forth its silk-slight film  
Between the being tied to you by birth,  
And you, until those slender threads compose  
A web that shrouds her daily life of hopes  
And fears and fancies, all her life, from yours—  
So close you live and yet so far apart!  
And must I rend this web, tear up, break down  
The sweet and palpitating mystery  
That makes her sacred? You—for you I mean,  
Shall I speak—shall I not speak?

*Mil.* . . . . . Speak!

*Tresh.*

. . . . . I will.

Is there a story men could—any man  
Could tell of you, you would conceal from me?  
I'll never think there's falsehood on that lip!  
Say, “There is no such story men could tell,”

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

And I'll believe you, tho' I disbelieve  
The world . . . the world of better men than I,  
And women such as I suppose you—Speak!  
[After a pause.] Not speak? Explain then! clear  
up, then! Move

Some of the miserable weight away  
That presses lower than the grave! Not speak? ·  
Some of the dead weight, Mildred! Ah, if I  
Could bring myself to plainly make their charge  
Against you! Must I, Mildred? Silent still?  
[After a pause.] Is there a gallant that has night by  
night

Admittance to your chamber?

[After a pause.] Then, his name!  
Till now, I only had a thought for you—  
But now,—his name!

*Mil.* Thorold, do you devise  
Fit expiation for my guilt, if fit  
There be! 'tis nought to say that I'll endure  
And bless you,—that my spirit yearns to purge  
Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire—  
But do not plunge me into other guilt!  
Oh, guilt enough! I cannot tell his name.

*Tresh.* Then judge yourself! How should I act?  
Pronounce!

*Mil.* Oh, Thorold, you must never tempt me thus!  
To die here in this chamber by that sword  
Would seem like punishment—so should I glide,  
Like an arch-cheat, into extremest bliss!  
'Twere easily arranged for me! but you—  
What would become of you?

*Tresh.* And what will now  
Become of me? I'll hide your shame and mine  
From every eye; the dead must heave their hearts  
Under the marble of our chapel-floor;  
They cannot rise and blast you! You may wed  
Your paramour above our mother's tomb;  
Our mother cannot move from 'neath your foot.  
We two will somehow wear this one day out:  
But with to-morrow hastens here—the Earl!

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

The youth without suspicion that faces come  
From Heaven, and hearts from . . . whence proceed  
such hearts?

I have despatched last night at your command  
A missive bidding him present himself  
To-morrow here—thus much is said—the rest  
Is understood as if 'twere written down—

“His suit finds favour in your eyes,”—now dictate  
This morning's letter that shall countermand  
Last night's—do dictate that!

*Mil.*

But, Thorold—if

I will receive him as I said?

*Tresh.*

*The Earl?*

*Mil.* I will receive him!

*Tresh.* [*Starting up.*]

Ho there! Guendolen!

GUENDOLEN and AUSTIN enter.

And, Austin, you are welcome too! Look there!  
The woman there!

*Aus. & Guen.* How? Mildred?

*Tresh.*

Mildred once!

Now the receiver night by night, when sleep  
Blesses the inmates of her father's house,  
—I say, the soft sly wanton that receives  
Her guilt's accomplice 'neath this roof which holds  
You, Guendolen, you, Austin, and has held  
A thousand Treshams—never one like her!  
No lighter of the signal lamp her quick  
Foul breath near quenches in hot eagerness  
To mix with breath as foul! no loosener  
Of the lattice, practised in the stealthy tread,  
The low voice and the noiseless come-and-go!  
Not one composer of the Bacchant's mien  
Into—what you thought Mildred's, in a word!  
Know her!

*Guen.* Oh, Mildred look to me, at least!  
Thorold—she's dead, I'd say, but that she stands  
Rigid as stone and whiter!

*Tresh.*

You have heard . . .

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

*Guen.* Too much! you must proceed no further!

*Mil.* Yes—

Proceed—All's truth! Go from me!

*Tresh.*

All is truth,

She tells you! Well, you know, or ought to know,

All this I would forgive in her. I'd con

Each precept the harsh world enjoins, I'd take

Our ancestors' stern verdicts one by one,

I'd bind myself before them to exact

The prescribed vengeance—and one word of hers,

The sight of her, the bare least memory

Of Mildred, my one sister, my heart's pride

Above all prides, my all in all so long,

Had scattered every trace of my resolve!

What were it silently to waste away

And see her waste away from this day forth,

Two scathed things with leisure to repent,

And grow acquainted with the grave, and die,

Tired out if not at peace, and be forgotten?

It were not so impossible to bear!

But this—that, fresh from last night's pledge renewed

Of love with the successful gallant there,

She'll calmly bid me help her to entice,

Inveigle an unconscious trusting youth

Who thinks her all that's chaste, and good, and pure,

—Invite me to betray him . . . who so fit

As honor's self to cover shame's arch-deed?

—That she'll receive Lord Mertoun—(her own phrase)—

This, who could bear? Why, you have heard of thieves,

Stabbers, the earth's disgrace—who yet have laughed,

“Talk not of tortures to me—I'll betray

“No comrade I've pledged faith to!”—you have heard

Of wretched women—all but Mildreds—tied

By wild illicit ties to losels vile

You'd tempt them to forsake; and they'll reply

“Gold, friends, repute, I left for him, I have

“In him, why should I leave him then for gold,

“Repute, or friends?”—and you have felt your heart

Respond to such poor outcasts of the world

As to so many friends; bad as you please,

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

You've felt they were God's men and women still,  
So not to be disowned by you! but she,  
That stands there, calmly gives her lover up  
As means to wed the Earl that she may hide  
Their intercourse the surelier! and, for this,  
I curse her to her face before you all!  
Shame hunt her from the earth! Then Heaven do right  
To both! It hears me now—shall judge her then!

[As MILDRED faints and falls, TRESHAM rushes out.]

Aus. Stay, Tresham, we'll accompany you!

Guen.

We?

What, and leave Mildred? We? why, where's my place  
But by her side, and where's yours but by mine?  
Mildred—one word—only look at me, then!

Aus. No, Guendolen! I echo Thorold's voice!  
She is unworthy to behold . . .

Guen.

Us two?

If you spoke on reflection, and if I  
Approved your speech—if you (to put the thing  
At lowest) you, the soldier, bound to make  
The King's cause yours, and fight for it, and throw  
Regard to others of its right or wrong,  
—If with a death-white woman you can help,  
Let alone sister, let alone a Mildred,  
You left her—or if I, her cousin, friend  
This morning, playfellow but yesterday,  
Who've said, or thought at least a thousand times,  
"I'd serve you if I could," should now face round  
And say, "Ah, that's to only signify  
"I'd serve you while you're fit to serve yourself—  
"So long as fifty eyes await the turn  
"Of yours to forestall its yet half-formed wish,  
"I'll proffer my assistance you'll not need—  
"When every tongue is praising you, I'll join  
"The praisers' chorus—when you're hemmed about  
"With lives between you and detraction—lives  
"To be laid down if a rude voice, rash eye,  
"Rough hand should violate the sacred ring  
"Their worship throws about you,—then indeed,  
"Who'll stand up for you stout as I?" If so

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

We said and so we did,—not Mildred there  
Would be unworthy to behold us both,  
But we should be unworthy, both of us,  
To be beheld by—by—your meanest dog,  
Which, if that sword were broken in your face  
Before a crowd, that badge torn off your breast,  
And you cast out with hootings and contempt,  
—Would push his way thro' all the hooters, gain  
Your side, go off with you and all your shame  
To the next ditch you choose to die in! Austin,  
Do you love me? Here's Austin, Mildred,—here's  
Your brother says he does not believe half—  
No, nor half that—of all he heard! He says,  
Look up and take his hand!

*Aus.* Look up and take  
My hand, dear Mildred!

*Mil.* I—I was so young!  
Beside, I loved him, Thorold—and I had  
No mother—God forgot me—so I fell!

*Guen.* Mildred!

*Mil.* Require no further! Did I dream  
That I could palliate what is done? All's true.  
Now, punish me! A woman takes my hand!  
Let go my hand! You do not know, I see—  
I thought that Thorold told you.

*Guen.* What is this?  
Where start you to?

*Mil.* Oh Austin, loosen me!  
You heard the whole of it—your eyes were worse,  
In their surprise, than Thorold's! Oh, unless  
You stay to execute his sentence, loose  
My hand! Has Thorold gone, and are you here?

*Guen.* Here, Mildred, we two friends of yours will  
wait

Your bidding; be you silent, sleep or muse!  
Only, when you shall want your bidding done,  
How can we do it if we are not by?  
Here's Austin waiting patiently your will!  
One spirit to command, and one to love  
And to believe in it and do its best,

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

Poor as that is, to help it—why, the world  
Has been won many a time, its length and breadth,  
By just such a beginning!

*Mil.*

I believe

If once I threw my arms about your neck  
And sunk my head upon your breast, that I  
Should weep again!

*Guen.*

Let go her hand now, Austin.

Wait for me.—Pace the gallery and think  
On the world's seemings and realities  
Until I call you.

[AUSTIN goes.]

*Mil.*

No—I cannot weep!

No more tears from this brain—no sleep—no tears!  
O Guendolen, I love you!

*Guen.*

Yes: and “love”

Is a short word that says so very much!  
It says that you confide in me.

*Mil.*

Confide!

*Guen.* Your lover's name, then! I've so much to  
learn,

Ere I can work in your behalf!

*Mil.*

My friend,

You know I cannot tell his name.

*Guen.*

At least

He is your lover? and you love him too?

*Mil.* Ah, do you ask me that?—but I am fallen  
So low!

*Guen.* You love him still, then?

*Mil.*

My sole prop

Against the guilt that crushes me! I say,  
Each night ere I lie down, “I was so young—  
“I had no mother—and I loved him so!”  
And then God seems indulgent, and I dare  
Trust him my soul in sleep.

*Guen.*

How could you let us  
E'en talk to you about Lord Mertoun then?

*Mil.* There is a cloud around me.

*Guen.*

But you said

You would receive his suit in spite of this?

*Mil.* I say there is a cloud . . .



## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

*Guen.* No cloud to me!  
Lord Mertoun and your lover are the same!

*Mil.* What maddest fancy . . .

*Guen.* [*calling aloud.*] Austin! (Spare your pains—  
When I have got a truth, that truth I keep)—

*Mil.* By all you love, sweet Guendolen, forbear!  
Have I confided in you . . .

*Guen.* Just for this!  
Austin!—Oh, not to guess it at the first!  
But I *did* guess it—that is, I divined—  
Felt by an instinct how it was—why else  
Should I pronounce you free from all that heap  
Of sins which had been irredeemable?  
I felt they were not yours—what other way  
Than this, not yours? The secret's wholly mine!

*Mil.* If you would see me die before his face . . .

*Guen.* I'd hold my peace! And if the Earl returns  
To-night?

*Mil.* Ah, Heaven, he's lost!

*Guen.* I thought so! Austin!

*Enter AUSTIN.*

Oh, where have you been hiding?

*Aus.* Thorold's gone,  
I know not how, across the meadow-land.  
I watched him till I lost him in the skirts  
Of the beech-wood.

*Guen.* Gone? All thwarts us!

*Mil.* Thorold too?

*Guen.* I have thought. First lead this Mildred to  
her room.

Go on the other side: and then we'll seek  
Your brother; and I'll tell you, by the way,  
The greatest comfort in the world. You said  
There was a clew to all. Remember, sweet,  
He said there was a clew! I hold it. Come!

# A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

## ACT III

SCENE I. *The end of the Yew-tree Avenue under MILDRED'S window. A light seen through a central red pane.*

*Enter TRESHAM through the trees.*

Again here! But I cannot lose myself.  
The heath—the orchard—I have traversed glades  
And dells and bosky paths which used to lead  
Into green wild-wood depths, bewildering  
My boy's adventurous step; and now they tend  
Hither or soon or late; the blackest shade  
Breaks up, the thronged trunks of the trees ope wide,  
And the dim turret I have fled from fronts  
Again my step; the very river put  
Its arm about me and conducted me  
To this detested spot. Why then, I'll shun  
Their will no longer—do your will with me!  
Oh, bitter! To have reared a towering scheme  
Of happiness, and to behold it razed,  
Were nothing: all men hope, and see their hopes  
Frustrate, and grieve awhile, and hope anew:  
But I . . . to hope that from a line like ours  
No horrid prodigy like this would spring,  
Were just as though I hoped that from these old  
Confederates against the sovereign day,  
Children of older and yet older sires  
(Whose living coral berries dropped, as now  
On me, on many a baron's surcoat once,  
On many a beauty's wimple) would proceed  
No poison-tree, to thrust, from Hell its root,  
Hither and thither its strange snaky arms.  
Why came I here? What must I do?—[*A bell strikes.*]  
—A bell?

Midnight! and 'tis at midnight . . . Ah, I catch  
—Woods, river, plains, I catch your meaning now,  
And I obey you! Hist! This tree will serve!

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

*[He retires behind one of the trees. After a pause enter MERTOUN cloaked as before,*

*Mer.* Not time! Beat out thy last voluptuous  
beat

Of hope and fear, my heart! I thought the clock  
In the chapel struck as I was pushing thro'  
The ferns. And so I shall no more see rise  
My love-star! Oh, no matter for the past!  
So much the more delicious task to see  
Mildred revive: to pluck out, thorn by thorn,  
All traces of the rough forbidden path  
My rash love lured her to! Each day must see  
Some fear of hers effaced, some hope renewed!  
Then there will be surprises, unforeseen  
Delights in store. I'll not regret the past!

*[The light is placed above in the purple pane.*  
And see, my signal rises! Mildred's star!  
I never saw it lovelier than now  
It rises for the last time! If it sets,  
'Tis that the re-assuring sun may dawn!

*[As he prepares to ascend the last tree of the avenue, TRESHAM arrests his arm.*

Unhand me—peasant, by your grasp! Here's gold.  
'Twas a mad freak of mine. I said I'd pluck  
A branch from the white-blossomed shrub beneath  
The casement there! Take this, and hold your peace.

*Tresh.* Into the moonlight yonder, come with me!  
—Out of the shadow!

*Mer.* I am'armed, fool!

*Tresh.* Yes,  
Or no?—You'll come into the light, or no?  
My hand is on your throat—refuse!—

*Mer.* That voice!  
Where have I heard . . . no—that was mild and slow.  
I'll come with you! *[They advance.*

*Tresh.* You're armed—that's well.

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

Your name—who are you ?

*Mer.* (Tresham !—she is lost !)

*Tresh.* Oh, silent? Do you know, you bear your-  
self

Exactly as, in curious dreams I've had  
How felons, this wild earth is full of, look  
When they're detected, still your kind has looked !  
The bravo holds an assured countenance,  
The thief is voluble and plausible,  
But silently the slave of lust has crouched  
When I have fancied it before a man !  
Your name?

*Mer.* I do conjure Lord Tresham—ay,  
Kissing his foot, if so I might prevail—  
That he for his own sake forbear to ask  
My name ! As Heaven's above, his future weal  
Or woe depends upon my silence ! Vain !  
I read your white inexorable face !  
Know me, Lord Tresham !

[*He throws off his disguises.*

*Tresh.* Mertoun!

[*After a pause.*] Draw now !

*Mer.* Hear me

But speak first !

*Tresh.* Not one least word on your life !  
Be sure that I will strangle in your throat  
The least word that informs me how you live  
And yet seem what you seem ! No doubt 'twas you  
Taught Mildred still to keep that face and sin !  
We should join hands in frantic sympathy  
If you once taught me the unteachable,  
Explained how you can live so, and so lie !  
With God's help I retain, despite my sense,  
The old belief—a life like yours is still  
Impossible ! Now draw !

*Mer.* Not for my sake,  
Do I entreat a hearing—for your sake,  
And most, for her sake !

*Tresh.* Ha, ha, what should I  
Know of your ways? A miscreant like yourself,

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

How must one rouse his ire?—A blow?—that's pride  
No doubt, to him! one spurns him, does one not?  
Or sets the foot upon his mouth—or spits  
Into his face! Come—which, or all of these?

*Mer.* 'Twixt him, and me, and Mildred, Heaven be  
judge!

Can I avoid this? Have your will, my Lord!

[*He draws, and, after a few passes, falls.*]

*Tresh.* You are not hurt?

*Mer.* You'll hear me now!

*Tresh.* But rise!

*Mer.* Ah, Tresham, say I not "you'll hear me  
now!"

And what procures a man the right to speak  
In his defence before his fellow-man,  
But—I suppose—the thought that presently  
He may have leave to speak before his God  
His whole defence?

*Tresh.* Not hurt? It cannot be!

You made no effort to resist me. Where  
Did my sword reach you? Why not have returned  
My thrusts? Hurt where?

*Mer.* My lord—

*Tresh.* How young he is!

*Mer.* Lord Tresham, I am very young, and yet  
I have entangled other lives with mine.  
Do let me speak—and do believe my speech,  
That when I die before you presently,—

*Tresh.* Can you stay here till I return with help?

*Mer.* Oh, stay by me! When I was less than boy  
I did you grievous wrong, and knew it not—  
Upon my honor, knew it not! Once known,  
I could not find what seemed a better way  
To right you than I took: my life—you feel  
How less than nothing had been giving you  
The life you've taken! But I thought my way  
The better—only for your sake and hers.  
And as you have decided otherwise,  
Would I had an infinity of lives  
To offer you!—now say—instruct me—think!

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

Can you from out the minutes I have left  
Eke out my reparation? Oh—think—think!  
For I must wring a partial—dare I say,  
Forgiveness from you, ere I die?

*Tresh.* I do

Forgive you.

*Mer.* Wait and ponder that great word  
Because, if you forgive, I shall hope  
To speak to you of—Mildred!

*Tresh.* Mertoun,—haste  
And anger have undone us. 'Tis not you  
Should tell me for a novelty you're young—  
Thoughtless—unable to recall the past!  
Be but your pardon ample as my own!

*Mer.* Ah, Tresham, that a sword-stroke and a drop  
Of blood or two, should bring all this about!  
Why, 'twas my very fear of you—my love  
Of you—(what passion's like a boy's for one  
Like you?)—that ruined me! I dreamed of you—  
You, all accomplished, courted everywhere,  
The scholar and the gentleman. I burned  
To knit myself to you—but I was young,  
And your surpassing reputation kept me  
So far aloof—oh, wherefore all that love?  
With less of love, my glorious yesterday  
Of praise and gentle words and kindest looks,  
Had taken place perchance six months ago!  
Even now—how happy we had been! And yet  
I know the thought of this escaped you, Tresham!  
Let me look up into your face—I feel  
'Tis changed above me—yet my eyes are glazed.  
Where? where?

*[As he endeavours to raise himself, his eye catches the lamp.]*

Ah, Mildred! What will Mildred do?  
Tresham, her life is bound up in the life  
That's bleeding fast away!—I'll live—must live,  
There! if you'll only turn me I shall live  
And save her! Tresham—oh, had you but heard!  
Had you but heard! What right have you to set

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

The thoughtless foot upon her life and mine,  
And then say, as we perish, "Had I thought,  
"All had gone otherwise." We've sinned and die :  
Never you sin, Lord Tresham!—for you'll die,  
And God will judge you.

*Tresh.* Yes, be satisfied—  
That process is begun.

*Mer.* And she sits there  
Waiting for me. Now, say you this to her—  
You—not another—say, I saw him die  
As he breathed this—"I love her"—(you don't know  
What those three small words mean) say, loving her  
Lowers me down the bloody slope to death  
With memories . . . I speak to her—not you,  
Who had no pity—will have no remorse,  
Perchance intend her . . . Die along with me,  
Dear Mildred!—'tis so easy—and you'll 'scape  
So much unkindness! Can I lie at rest,  
With rude speech spoken to you, ruder deeds  
Done to you—heartless men to have my heart,  
And I tied down with grave-clothes and the worm,  
Aware, perhaps, of every blow—Oh God!—  
Upon those lips—yet of no power to tear  
The felon stripe by stripe? Die, Mildred! Leave  
Their honorable world to them—for God  
We're good enough, tho' the world casts us out!

[*A whistle is heard.*]

*Tresh.* Ho, Gerard!

*Enter GERARD, AUSTIN, and GUENDOLEN, with lights.*

No one speak! you see what's done!  
I cannot bear another voice!

*Mer.* There's light—  
Light all about me and I move to it.  
Tresham, did I not tell you—did you not  
Just promise to deliver words of mine  
To Mildred?

*Tresh.* I will bear those words to her.

*Mer.* Now?

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

*Tresh.* Now! Lift you the body, Gerard, and leave  
me

The head.

[*As they have half raised MERTOUN, he turns suddenly.*

*Mer.* I knew they turned me—turn me not from  
her!

There! stay you! there!

[*Dies.*

*Guen.* [*after a pause.*] Austin, remain you here  
With Thorold until Gerard comes with help—  
Then lead him to his chamber. I must go.  
To Mildred.

*Tresh.* Guendolen, I hear each word  
You utter—did you hear him bid me give  
His message? Did you hear my promise? I,  
And only I, see Mildred!

*Guen.* She will die.

*Tresh.* Oh no, she will not die! I dare not hope  
She'll die. What ground have you to think she'll die?  
Why, Austin's with you!

*Aus.* Had we but arrived  
Before you fought!

*Tresh.* There was no fight at all!  
He let me slaughter him—the boy!—I'll trust  
The body there to you and Gerard—thus!  
Now bear him on before me.

*Aus.* Whither bear him?

*Tresh.* Oh, to my chamber. When we meet there  
next,  
We shall be friends.

[*They bear out the body of MERTOUN.*  
Will she die, Guendolen?

*Guen.* Where are you taking me?

*Tresh.* He fell just here!  
Now answer me. Shall you in your whole life  
—You who have nought to do with Mertoun's fate,  
Now you have seen his breast upon the turf,  
Shall you e'er walk this way if you can help?  
When you and Austin wander arm in arm  
Thro' our ancestral grounds, will not a shade



## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

Be ever on the meadow and the waste—  
Another kind of shade than when the night  
Shuts the woodside with all its whispers up!  
But will you ever so forget his breast  
As willingly to cross this bloody turf  
Under the black yew avenue? That's well!  
You turn your head! and I then?—

*Guen.* What is done  
Is done! My care is for the living. Thorold,  
Bear up against this burthen—more remains  
To set the neck to!

*Tresh.* Dear and ancient trees  
My fathers planted, and I loved so well!  
What have I done that, like some fabled crime  
Of yore, lets loose a fury leading thus  
Her miserable dance amidst you all?  
Oh, never more for me shall winds intone  
With all your tops a vast antiphony,  
Demanding and responding in God's praise!  
Hers ye are now—not mine! Farewell—Farewell!

### SCENE II. MILDRED'S Chamber. MILDRED alone.

He comes not! I have heard of those who seemed  
Resourceless in prosperity,—you thought  
Sorrow might slay them when she listed—yet  
Did they so gather up their diffused strength  
At her first menace, that they bade her strike,  
And stood and laughed her subtlest skill to scorn.  
Oh, 'tis not so with me! the first woe fell,  
And the rest fall upon it, not on me:  
Else should I bear that Henry comes not?—fails  
Just this first night out of so many nights?  
Loving is done with! Were he sitting now,  
As so few hours since, on that seat, we'd love  
No more—contrive no thousand happy ways  
To hide love from the loveless, any more!  
I think I might have urged some little point  
In my defence, to Thorold; he was breathless  
For the least hint of a defence; but no!

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

The first shame over, all that would might fall.  
No Henry! Yet I merely sit and think  
The morn's deed o'er and o'er. I must have crept  
Out of myself. A Mildred that has lost  
Her lover—oh, I dare not look upon  
Such woe! I crouch away from it! 'Tis she,  
Mildred, will break her heart, not I! The world  
Forsakes me—only Henry's left me—left?  
When I have lost him, for he does not come,  
And I sit stupidly. . . . Oh Heaven, break up  
This worse than anguish, this mad apathy,  
By any means or any messenger!

*Tresh.* [*without.*] Mildred!

*Mil.* Come in! Heaven hears me!

[*TRESHAM enters.*]

You? alone?

Oh, no more cursing!

*Tresh.* Mildred, I must sit.

There—you sit!

*Mil.* Say it, Thorold—do not look  
The curse—deliver all you come to say!

What must become of me? Oh speak that thought  
Which makes your brow and cheek so pale!

*Tresh.* My thought?

*Mil.* All of it!

*Tresh.* How we waded—years ago—  
After those water-lilies, till the plash,  
I know not how, surprised us; and you dared  
Neither advance nor turn back, so we stood  
Laughing and crying until Gerard came—  
Once safe upon the turf, the loudest, too,  
For once more reaching the relinquished prize!  
How idle thoughts are—some men's—dying men's!  
Mildred,—

*Mil.* You call me kindlier by my name  
Than even yesterday—what is in that?

*Tresh.* It weighs so much upon my mind that I  
This morning took an office not my own!  
I might . . . of course, I must be glad or grieved,  
Content or not, at every little thing  
That touches you—I may with a wrung heart

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

Even reprove you, Mildred; I did more—  
Will you forgive me?

*Mil.* Thorold? do you mock? . . .  
Or no . . . and yet you bid me . . . say that word!  
*Tresh.* Forgive me, Mildred!—are you silent, sweet?  
*Mil.* [*starting up.*] Why does not Henry Mertoun  
come to-night?

Are *you*, too, silent?

[*Dashing his mantle aside, and pointing to his  
scabbard, which is empty.*

Ah, this speaks for you!  
You've murdered Henry Mertoun! now proceed!  
What is it I must pardon? This and all?  
Well, I do pardon you—I think I do.  
Thorold, how very wretched you must be!

*Tresh.* He bade me tell you. . . .

*Mil.* What I do forbid  
Your utterance of! so much that you may tell  
And will not—how you murdered him . . . but, no!  
You'll tell me that he loved me, never more  
Than bleeding out his life there—must I say  
“Indeed” to that? Enough! I pardon you!

*Tresh.* You cannot, Mildred! for the harsh words,  
yes:

Of this last deed Another's Judge—whose doom  
I wait in doubt, despondency, and fear.

*Mil.* Oh true! there's nought for me to pardon!  
True!

You loosed my soul of all its cares at once—  
Death makes me sure of him for ever! *You*  
Tell me his last words? *He* shall tell me them,  
And take my answer—not in words, but reading  
Himself the heart I had to read him late,  
Which death . . .

*Tresh.* Death? you are dying too? Well said  
Of Guendolen! I dared not hope you'd die—  
But she was sure of it.

*Mil.* Tell Guendolen  
I loved her, and tell Austin . . .

*Tresh.* . . . Him you loved—

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

And me?

*Mil.* Ah, Thorold! was't not rashly done  
To quench that blood, on fire with youth and hope  
And love of me, whom you loved too, and yet  
Suffered to sit here waiting his approach  
While you were slaying him? Oh, doubtlessly  
You let him speak his poor confused boy's-speech  
—Do his poor utmost to disarm your wrath  
And respite me!—you let him try to give  
The story of our loves, and ignorance,  
And the brief madness, and the long despair—  
You let him plead all this, because your code  
Of honor bids you hear before you strike:  
But at the end, as he looked up for life  
Into your eyes—you struck him down!

*Tresh.*

No! no!

Had I but heard him—had I let him speak  
Half the truth—less—had I looked long on him,  
I had desisted! Why, as he lay there,  
The moon on his flushed cheek, I gathered all  
The story ere he told it! I saw thro'  
The troubled surface of his crime and yours  
A depth of purity immovable!  
Had I but glanced, where all seemed turbidest  
Had gleamed some inlet to the calm beneath!  
I would not glance—my punishment's at hand.  
There, Mildred, is the truth! and you—say on—  
You curse me?

*Mil.* As I dare approach that Heaven  
Which has not bade a living thing despair,  
Which needs no code to keep its grace from stain,  
But bids the vilest worm that turns on it  
Desist and be forgiven,—I—forgive not,  
But bless you, Thorold, from my soul of souls!

[Falls on his neck.

There! do not think too much upon the past!  
The cloud that's broke was all the same a cloud  
While it stood up between my friend and you!  
You hurt him 'neath its shadow—but is that  
So past retrieve? I have his heart, you know—

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

I may dispose of it—I give it you!

It loves you as mine loves! Confirm me, Henry!

[Dies.

*Tresh.* I wish thee joy, beloved! I am glad  
In thy full gladness!

*Guen.* [without.] Mildred! Tresham!

[Entering with AUSTIN] Thorold,

I could desist no longer. Ah, she swoons!

That's well—

*Tresh.* Oh! better far than that!

*Guen.* She's dead!

Let me unlock her arms!

*Tresh.* She threw them thus  
About my neck, and blessed me, and then died.  
—You'll let them stay now, Guendolen!

*Aus.* Leave her  
And look to him! What ails you, Thorold?

*Guen.* White  
As she—and whiter! Austin—quick—this side!

*Aus.* A froth is oozing thro' his clenched teeth—  
Both lips, where they're not bitten thro', are black!  
Speak, dearest Thorold!

*Tresh.* Something does weigh down  
My neck beside her weight: thanks: I should fall  
But for you, Austin, I believe!—there, there—  
'Twill pass away soon!—ah, I had forgotten—  
I am dying.

*Guen.* Thorold—Thorold—why was this?

*Tresh.* I said, just as I drank the poison off,  
The earth would be no longer earth to me,  
The life out of all life was gone from me!  
There are blind ways provided, the foredone  
Heart-weary player in this pageant-world  
Drops out by, letting the main masque defile  
By the conspicuous portal:—I am through—  
Just through:—

*Guen.* Don't leave him, Austin! death is close.

*Tresh.* Already Mildred's face is peacefuller!  
I see you, Austin—feel you—here's my hand,  
Put yours in it—You, Guendolen, yours too!

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

You're Lord and Lady now—You're Treshams—Name  
And fame are yours—You hold our 'Scutcheon up.  
Austin, no Blot on it! You see how blood  
Must wash one blot away: the first blot came  
And the first blood came. To the vain world's eye  
All's gules again—no care to the vain world,  
From whence the red was drawn!

*Aus.* No blot shall come!

*Tresh.* I said that—yet it did come. Should it come,  
Vengeance is God's not man's. Remember me!

*[Dies.]*

*Guen.* *[letting fall the pulseless arm.]* Ah, Thorold,  
we can but—remember you!

# COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

## A PLAY

" Ivy and violet, what do ye here,

" With blossom and shoot in the warm spring-weather,

" Hiding the arms of Monchenci and Vere? "

HANMER.

DEDICATION

NO ONE LOVES AND HONOURS BARRY CORNWALL  
MORE THAN ROBERT BROWNING DOES ;

WHO, HAVING NOTHING BETTER THAN THIS PLAY  
TO GIVE HIM IN PROOF OF IT,

MUST SAY SO.



# COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

## PERSONS

COLOMBE OF RAVESTEIN, Duchess of Juliers  
and Cleves.

SABYNE } Her Attendants.  
ADOLF }

GUIBERT }  
GAUCELME } Courtiers.  
MAUFROY }  
CLUGNET }

VALENCE, Advocate of Cleves.

PRINCE BERTHOLD, Claimant of the Duchy.

MELCHIOR, his Confidant.

PLACE, *The Palace at Juliers.*

TIME, 16—.

## ACT I.

*Morning.* SCENE—*A corridor leading to the Audience-chamber.*

GAUCELME, CLUGNET, MAUFROY, and other Courtiers,  
round GUIBERT, who is silently reading a paper:  
as he drops it at the end—

*Gui.* That this should be her birthday; and the day  
We all invested her, twelve months ago,  
As the late Duke's true heiress and our liege;  
And that this also must become the day . . .  
Oh, miserable lady!

*1st Court.*

*Ay, indeed?*

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

*2nd Court.* Well, Guibert?

*3rd Court.* But your news, my friend, your news!  
The sooner, friend, one learns Prince Berthold's  
pleasure,

The better for us all: how writes the Prince?  
Give me—I'll read it for the common good—

*Gui.* In time, sir—but, till time comes, pardon me!  
Our old Duke just disclosed his child's retreat,  
Declared her true succession to his rule,  
And died: this birthday was the day, last year,  
We convoyed her from Castle Ravestein—  
That sleeps out trustfully its extreme age  
On the Meuse' quiet bank, where she lived queen  
Over the water-buds,—to Juliers' Court  
With joy and bustle: here again we stand;  
Sir Gaucelme's buckle's constant to his cap—  
To-day's much such another sunny day!

*Gau.* Come, Guibert—this outgrows a jest, I think!  
You're hardly such a novice as to need  
The lesson, you pretend.

*Gui.* What lesson, sir?  
That everybody, if he'd thrive at court,  
Should, first and last of all, look to himself?  
Why, no: and therefore, with your good example,  
(—Ho, Master Adolf!)—to myself I'll look.

*Enter ADOLF.*

*Gui.* The Prince's letter; why, of all men else,  
Comes it to me?

*Adolf.* By virtue of your place,  
Sir Guibert! 'Twas the Prince's express charge,  
His envoy told us, that the missive there  
Should only reach our lady by the hand  
Of whosoever held your place.

*Gui.* Enough! [*ADOLF retires.*]  
Then, gentles, who'll accept a certain poor  
Indifferently honourable place,  
My friends, I make no doubt, have gnashed their teeth  
At leisure minutes these half-dozen years,

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

To find me never in the mood to quit?

—Who asks may have it, with my blessing, and—

*This* to present our lady. Who'll accept?

You,—you,—you? There it lies, and may, for me!

*Mau.* [*a youth, picking up the paper, reads aloud.*]

"Prince Berthold, proved by titles following

"Undoubted Lord of Juliers, comes this day

"To claim his own, with licence from the Pope,

"The Emperor, the Kings of Spain and France" . . .

*Gau.* Sufficient "titles following," I judge!

Don't read another! Well,—“to claim his own?”

*Mau.* “And take possession of the Duchy held

“Since twelve months, to the true heir's prejudice,

“By” . . . Colombe, Juliers' Mistress, so she thinks,

And Ravestein's mere lady, as we find!

Who wants the place and paper? Guibert's right!

I hope to climb a little in the world,—

I'd push my fortunes,—but, no more than he,

Could tell her on this happy day of days,

That, save the nosegay in her hand, perhaps,

There's nothing left to call her own! Sir Clugnet,

You famish for promotion; what say you?

*Clug.* [*an old man.*] To give this letter were a sort,

I take it,

Of service: services ask recompence:

What kind of corner may be Ravestein?

*Gui.* The castle?—Oh, you'd share her fortunes?

Good!

Three walls stand upright, full as good as four,

With no such bad remainder of a roof.

*Clug.* Oh,—but the Town?

*Gui.* Five houses, fifteen huts;

A church whereto was once a spire, 'tis judged;

And half a dyke, except in time of thaw

*Clug.* Still, there's some revenue?

*Gui.* Else Heaven forfend!

You hang a beacon out, should fogs increase;

So when the Autumn floats of pine-wood steer

Safe 'mid the white confusion, thanks to you,

Their grateful raftsmen fling a guilder in;

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

—That's if he means to pass your way next time.

*Clug.* If not?

*Gui.* Hang guilders, then—he blesses you!

*Clug.* What man do you suppose me? Keep your paper!

And let me say it shows no handsome spirit  
To dally with misfortune: keep your place!

*Gau.* Some one must tell her.

*Gui.* Some one may: you may!

*Gau.* Sir Guibert, 'tis no trifle turns me sick  
Of court-hypocrisy at years like mine,  
But this goes near it. Where's there news at all?  
Who'll have the face, for instance, to affirm  
He never heard, e'en while we crowned the girl,  
That Juliers' tenure was by Salic law;  
That one, confessed her father's cousin's child,  
And, she away, indisputable heir,  
Against our choice protesting and the Duke's,  
Claimed Juliers?—nor, as he preferred his claim,  
That first this, then another potentate,  
Inclined to its allowance?—I, or you,  
Or any one except the lady's self?  
Oh, it had been the direst cruelty  
To break the business to her! Things might change—  
At all events, we'd see next masque at end,  
Next mummery over first: and so the edge  
Was taken off sharp tidings as they came,  
Till here's the Prince upon us, and there's she  
—Wreathing her hair, a song between her lips,  
With just the faintest notion possible  
That some such claimant earns a livelihood  
About the world, by feigning grievances  
Few pay the story of, but grudge its price,  
And fewer listen to, a second time.  
Your method proves a failure; now try mine—  
And, since this must be carried . . .

*Gui.* [*snatching the paper from him.*] By your leave  
Your zeal transports you! 'Twill not serve the Prince  
So much as you expect, this course you'd take;  
If she leaves quietly her palace,—well:

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

But if she died upon its threshold,—no :  
 He'd have the trouble of removing her !  
 Come, gentles, we're all—what the devil knows !  
 You, Gaucelme, won't lose character, beside—  
 You broke your father's heart superiorly  
 To gather his succession—never blush !  
 You're from my province, and, be comforted,  
 They tell of it with wonder to this day—  
 You can afford to let your talent sleep !  
 We'll take the very worst supposed, as true—  
 There, the old Duke knew, when he hid his child  
 Among the river-flowers at Ravestein,  
 With whom the right lay ! Call the Prince our Duke !  
 There, she's no Duchess, she's no anything  
 More than a young maid with the bluest eyes—  
 And now, sirs, we'll not break this young maid's heart  
 Coolly as Gaucelme could and would ! No haste !  
 His talent's full-blown, ours but in the bud—  
 We'll not advance to his perfection yet—  
 Will we, Sir Maufroy ? See, I've ruined Maufroy  
 For ever as a courtier !

*Gau.* Here's a coil—

And, count us, will you ? Count its residue,  
 This boasted convoy, this day last year's crowd !  
 A birthday, too—a gratulation-day !  
 I'm dumb : bid *that* keep silence !

*Mau. and others.*

Eh, Sir Guibert ?

He's right : that does say something : that's bare truth.  
 Ten—twelve, I make : a perilous dropping off !

*Gui.* Pooh—is it audience-hour ? The vestibule  
 Swarms too, I wager, with the common sort  
 That want our privilege of entry here.

*Gau.* Adolf ! [*Re-enter ADOLF.*] Who's outside ?

*Gui.* Oh, your looks suffice !

Nobody waiting ?

*Mau.* [*looking through the door-folds.*] Scarce our  
 number !

*Gui.* 'Sdeath !

Nothing to beg for, to complain about ?

It can't be ! Ill news spreads, but not so fast

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

As thus to frighten all the world!

*Gau.* The world  
Lives out of doors, sir—not with you and me  
By presence-chamber porches, state-room stairs,  
Wherever warmth's perpetual: outside's free  
To every wind from every compass-point,  
And who may get nipped needs be weather-wise.  
The Prince comes and the lady's People go;  
The snow-goose settles down, the swallows flee—  
Why should they wait for winter-time? 'Tis instinct;  
Don't you feel somewhat chilly?

*Gai.* That's their craft?  
And last year's crowders-round and criers-forth,  
That strewed the garlands, overarched the roads,  
Lit up the bonfires, sang the loyal songs!  
Well, 'tis my comfort, you could never call me  
The People's Friend! The People keep their word—  
I keep my place: don't doubt I'll entertain  
The People when the Prince comes, and the People  
Are talked of!—Then, their speeches—no one tongue  
Found respite, not a pen had holiday  
—For they wrote, too, as well as spoke, these knaves!  
Now see: we tax and tithe them, pill and poll,  
They wince and fret enough, but pay they must  
—We manage that,—so pay with a good grace  
They might as well, it costs so little more.  
But when we've done with taxes, meet folk next  
Outside the toll-booth and the rating-place,  
In public—there they have us if they will,  
We're at their mercy after that, you see—  
For one tax not ten devils could extort;  
Over and above necessity, a grace;  
This prompt disbosoming of love, to wit—  
Their vine-leaf-wrappage of our tribute-penny  
And crowning attestation, all works well—  
Yet this precisely do they thrust on us!  
These cappings quick, and crook-and-cringings low,  
Hand to the heart, and forehead to the knee,  
With grin that shuts the eyes and opes the mouth—  
So tender they their love; and tender made,

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

Go home to curse you, the first doit you ask;  
As if their souls were any longer theirs!  
As if they had not given ample warrant  
To who should clap a collar on their neck,  
Rings in their nose, a goad to either flank,  
And take them for the brute they boast themselves!  
—Stay—there's a bustle at the outer door—  
And somebody entreating . . . that's my name!  
Adolf,—I heard my name!

*Adolf.* 'Twas probably  
The Suitor.

*Gui.* Oh, there is one?

*Adolf.* With a suit  
He'd fain enforce in person.

*Gui.* The good heart  
—And the great fool! Just ope the mid-door's fold—  
Is that a lappet of his cloak, I see?

*Adolf.* If it bear plenteous signs of travel . . . ay,  
The very cloak my comrades tore!

*Gui.* Why tore?

*Adolf.* He seeks the Duchess' presence in that trim  
Since daybreak, was he posted hereabouts  
Lest he should miss the moment.

*Gui.* Where's he now?

*Adolf.* Gone for a minute possibly, not more.  
They have ado enough to thrust him back.

*Gui.* Ay—but my name, I caught?

*Adolf.* Oh, sir—he said  
—What was it?—You had known him formerly,  
And, he believed, would help him did you guess  
He waited now—you promised him as much—  
The old plea!—'Faith, he's back,—renews the charge!  
[Speaking at the door.] So long as the man parleys,  
peace outside!

Nor be too ready with your halberts, there!

*Gau.* My horse bespattered, as he blocked the path,  
A thin sour man not unlike somebody.

*Adolf.* He holds a paper in his breast, whereon  
He glances when his cheeks flush and his brow  
At each repulse—

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

*Gau.* I noticed he'd a brow.

*Adolf.* So glancing, he grows calmer, leans awhile  
Over the balustrade, adjusts his dress,  
And presently turns round, quiet again,  
With some new pretext for admittance.—Back!  
(*To GUIBERT.*)—Sir, he has seen you! Now cross hal-  
berts! Ha—

Pascal is prostrate—there lies Fabian too—  
No passage! Whither would the madman press?  
Close the doors quick on me!

*Gui.* Too late—he's here.

*Enter, hastily and with discomposed dress, VALENCE.*

*Val.* Sir Guibert, will you help me?—Me, that come  
Charged by your townsmen, all who starve at Cleves,  
To represent their heights and depths of woe  
Before our Duchess and obtain relief!  
Such errands barricade such doors, it seems:  
But not a common hindrance drives me back  
On all the sad yet hopeful faces, lit  
With hope for the first time, which sent me forth!  
Cleves, speak for me! Cleves' men and women,  
speak—

Who followed me—your strongest—many a mile  
That I might go the fresher from their ranks,  
—Who sit—your weakest—by the city-gates,  
To take me fuller of what news I bring  
As I return—for I must needs return!  
—Can I? 'Twere hard, no listener for their wrongs,  
To turn them back upon the old despair—  
Harder, Sir Guibert, than imploring thus—  
So I do—any way you please—implore!  
If you . . . but how should you remember Cleves?  
Yet they of Cleves remember you so well!  
—Ay, comment on each trait of you they keep,  
Your words and deeds caught up at second hand,—  
Proud, I believe, at bottom of their hearts,  
Of the very levity and recklessness  
Which only prove that you forget their wrongs.



## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

Cleves, the grand town, whose men and women starve,  
Is Cleves forgotten?—Then remember me!

You promised me that you would help me once

For other purpose: will you keep your word?

*Gui.* And who may you be, friend?

*Val.* Valence of Cleves.

*Gui.* Valence of . . . not the Advocate of Cleves

I owed my whole estate to, three years back?

Ay, well may you keep silence! Why, my lords,

You've heard, I'm sure, how, Pentecost three years,

I was so nearly ousted of my land

By some knaves' pretext,—(eh? when you refused me

Your ugly daughter, Clugnet,)—and you've heard

How I recovered it by miracle

—(When I refused her)! Here's the very friend,

—Valence of Cleves, all parties have to thank!

Nay, Valence, this procedure's vile in you—

I'm no more grateful than a courtier should,

But politic am I—I bear a brain,

Can cast about a little, might require

Your services a second time! I tried

To tempt you with advancement here to court

—“No!”—well, for curiosity at least

To view our life here—“No!”—our Duchess, then,—

—A pretty woman's worth some pains to see,

Nor is she spoiled, I take it, if a crown

Completes the forehead pale and tresses pure. . . .

*Val.* Our city trusted me its miseries,

And I am come.

*Gui.* So much for taste! But “come,”—

So may you be, for anything I know,

To beg the Pope's cross, or Sir Clugnet's daughter,

And with an equal chance you get all three!

If it was ever worth your while to come,

Was not the proper way worth finding too?

*Val.* Straight to the palace-portal, sir, I came—

*Gui.* —And said?—

*Val.* —That I had brought the miseries

Of a whole city to relieve.

*Gui.* —Which saying

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

Won your admittance? You saw me, indeed,  
And here, no doubt, you stand : as certainly,  
My intervention, I shall not dispute,  
Procures you audience ; which, if I procure,  
That paper's closely written—by Saint Paul,  
Here flock the Wrongs, follow the Remedies,  
Chapter and verse, One, Two, A, B, and C—  
Perhaps you'd enter, make a reverence,  
And launch these " miseries " from first to last ?

*Val.* How should they let me pause or turn aside ?

*Gau.* [to VALENCE.] My worthy sir, one question :  
you've come straight

From Cleves, you tell us : heard you any talk  
At Cleves about our lady ?

*Val.* Much.

*Gau.* And what ?

*Val.* Her wish was to redress all wrongs she knew.

*Gau.* That, you believed ?

*Val.* You see me, sir !

*Gau.* —Nor stopped

Upon the road from Cleves to Juliers here,  
For any—rumours you might find afloat ?

*Val.* I had my townsmen's wrongs to busy me.

*Gau.* This is the Lady's birthday, do you know ?  
—Her day of pleasure ?

*Val.* —I know that the Great,  
For Pleasure born, should still be on the watch  
To exclude Pleasure when a Duty offers :  
Even as, the Lowly too, for Duty born,  
May ever snatch a Pleasure if in reach :  
Both will have plenty of their birthright, sir !

*Gau.* [Aside to GUIBERT.] Sir Guibert, here's your  
man ! No scruples now—

You'll never find his like ! Time presses hard.  
I've seen your drift and Adolf's too, this while,  
But you can't keep the hour of audience back  
Much longer, and at noon the Prince arrives.

[Pointing to VALENCE.] Entrust *him* with it—fool no  
chance away !

*Gui.*—Him ?

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

*Gau.* —With the missive! What's the man to her?

*Gui.* No bad thought!—Yet, 'tis yours—who ever played

The tempting serpent—else, 'twere no bad thought!  
I should—and do—mistrust it for your sake,  
Or else . . .

*Enter an Official who communicates with ADOLF.*

*Adolf.* The Duchess will receive the Court!

*Gui.* Give us a moment, Adolf! Valence, friend,  
I'll help you: we of the service, you're to mark,  
Have special entry, while the herd . . . the folks  
Outside, get access through our help alone  
—Well, it is so, was so, and I suppose  
So ever will be—your natural lot is, therefore,  
To wait your turn and opportunity,  
And probably miss both. Now, I engage  
To set you, here and in a minute's space,  
Before the lady with full leave to plead  
Chapter and verse, and A, and B, and C,  
To heart's content.

*Val.* I grieve that I must ask,  
This being, yourself admit, the custom here,  
To what the price of such a favour mounts?

*Gui.* Just so! You're not without a courtier's tact!  
Little at court, as your quick instinct prompts,  
Do such as we without a recompense.

*Val.* Yours is?—

*Gui.* A trifle: here's a document  
'Tis some one's duty to present her Grace—  
I say, not mine—these say, not theirs—such points  
Have weight at court. Will you relieve us all  
And take it?—Just say, "I am bidden lay  
"This paper at the Duchess' feet."

*Val.*

No more?

I thank you, sir!

*Adolf.* Her Grace receives the Court!

*Gui.* [*Aside.*] Now, *sursum corda*, quoth the mass-  
priest! Do—

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

Whoever's my kind saint, do let alone  
These pushings to and fro, and pullings back ;  
Peaceably let me hang o' the devil's arm  
The downward path, if you can't pluck me off  
Completely ! Let me live quite his, or yours !

*[The Courtiers begin to range themselves, and  
move towards the door.]*

After me, Valence ! So our famous Cleves  
Lacks bread ? Yet don't we gallants buy their lace ?  
And dear enough—it beggars me, I know,  
To keep my very gloves fringed properly !  
This, Valence, is our Great State Hall you cross :  
Yon grey urn's veritable marcasite,  
The Pope's gift ; and those salvers testify  
The Emperor. Presently you'll set your foot  
. . . But you don't speak, friend Valence !

*Val.* . . . . . I shall speak.

*Gau.* [*Aside to GUIBERT.*] Guibert—it were no such  
ungraceful thing

If you and I, at first, seemed horrorstruck  
With the bad news. Look here, what you shall do !  
Suppose you, first, clap hand to sword and cry  
“Yield strangers our allegiance ? First I'll perish  
“Beside your Grace” !—and so give me the cue  
To . . .

*Gui.* Clap your hand to note-book and jot down  
That to regale the Prince with ? I conceive !  
[*To VALENCE.*] Do, Valence, speak, or I shall half  
suspect

You're plotting to supplant us, me the first,  
I' the Lady's favour : is't the grand harangue  
You mean to make, that thus engrosses you ?  
—Which of her virtues you'll apostrophise ?  
Or is't the fashion you aspire to start,  
Of that close-curled, not unbecoming hair ?  
—Or what else ponder you ?

*Val.* . . . . . My townsmen's wrongs !

# COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

## ACT II

Noon. SCENE. *The Presence-chamber.*

*The DUCHESS and SABYNE.*

*The D.* Announce that I am ready for the Court!

*Sab.* 'Tis scarcely audience-hour, I think—your  
Grace

May best consult your own relief, no doubt,  
And shun the crowd; but few can have arrived . . .

*The D.* Let those not yet arrived, then, keep  
away!

'Twas *me*, this day, last year at Ravestein,  
You hurried. It has been full time, beside,  
This half-hour. Do you hesitate?

*Sab.* Forgive me!

*The D.* Stay, Sabyne; let me hasten to make sure  
Of one true thanker: here with you begins  
My audience, claim you first its privilege!  
It is my birth's event they celebrate—  
You need not wish me more such happy days,  
But—ask some favour! Have you none to ask?  
Has Adolf none, then? this was far from least  
Of much I waited for impatiently,  
Assure yourself! It seemed so natural  
Your gift, beside this bunch of river-bells.  
Should be the power and leave of doing good  
To you, and greater pleasure to myself:  
You ask my leave to-day to marry Adolf?  
The rest is my concern.

*Sab.* Your Grace is ever  
Our Lady of dear Ravestein,—but, for Adolf . . .

*The D.* "But"? You have not, sure, changed in  
your regard  
And purpose towards him?

*Sab.* We change!

*The D.* Well, then? Well?

*Sab.* How could we two be happy, and, most like,

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

Leave Juliers, when . . . when . . . but 'tis audience-time !

*The D.* "When, if you left me, I were left indeed"—

Would you subjoin that?—Bid the Court approach !  
—Why should we play thus with each other, Sabyne ?  
Do I not know, if courtiers prove remiss,  
If friends detain me, and get blame for it,  
There is a cause ? Of last year's fervid throng  
Scarce one half comes now !

*Sab.* [*Aside.*] One half ? No, alas !

*The D.* So can the mere suspicion of a cloud  
Over my fortunes strike each loyal heart.  
They've heard of this Prince Berthold ; and, forsooth,  
Each foolish arrogant pretence he makes,  
May grow more foolish and more arrogant,  
They please to apprehend ! I thank their love !  
Admit them !

*Sab.* [*Aside.*] How much has she really learned ?

*The D.* Surely, whoever's absent, Tristan waits ?  
—Or at least Romuald, whom my father raised  
From nothing—come, he's faithful to me, come !  
(Sabyne, I should but be the prouder—yes,  
And fitter to comport myself aright)  
Not Romuald ? Xavier—what said he to that ?  
For Xavier hates a parasite, I know !

[*SABYNE goes out.*]

*The D.* Well, sunshine's everywhere, and summer too ;

Next year 'tis the old place again, perhaps—  
The water-breeze again, the birds again  
. . . It cannot be ! It is too late to be !  
What part had I, or choice in all of it ?  
Hither they brought me ; I had not to think  
Nor care, concern myself with doing good  
Or ill, my task was just—to live,—to live,  
And, answering ends there was no need explain,  
To render Juliers happy—so they said.  
All could not have been falsehood ! Some was love,  
And wonder and obedience—I did all

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

They looked for ! Why then cease to do it now ?  
Yet this is to be calmly set aside,  
And—ere next birthday's dawn, for aught I know,  
Things change, a claimant may arrive, and I . . .  
It cannot nor it shall not be ! His right ?  
Well then, he has the right, and I have not,  
—But who bade all of you surround my life  
And close its growth up with your Ducal crown  
Which, plucked off rudely, leaves me perishing ?  
I could have been like one of you,—loved, hoped,  
Feared, lived and died like one of you—but you  
Would take that life away and give me this,  
And I will keep this ! I will face you—Come !

*Enter the Courtiers and VALENCE.*

*The Courtiers.* Many such happy mornings to your  
Grace !

*The D. [Aside, as they pay their devoir.]* The same  
words—the same faces,—the same love !

I have been over-fearful. These are few—  
But these, at least, stand firmly—these are mine !  
As many come as may, and if no more,  
'Tis that these few suffice—they do suffice !  
What succour may not next year bring me ! Plainly  
I feared too soon ! [*to the Court.*] I thank you, sirs :  
all thanks !

*Val. [Aside, as the DUCHESS passes from one group  
to another, conversing.]*

'Tis she—the vision this day last year brought,  
When for a golden moment at our Cleves  
She tarried in her progress hither. Cleves  
Chose me to speak its welcome, and I spoke  
—Not that she could have noted the recluse  
—Ungainly, old before his time—who gazed—  
. . . Well, Heaven's gifts are not wasted, and that  
gaze

Kept, and shall keep me to the end, her own !  
She was above it—but so would not sink  
My gaze to earth ! The People caught it, hers—

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

Thenceforward, mine; but thus entirely mine,  
Who shall affirm, had she not raised my soul  
Ere she retired and left me—them?—She turns—  
There's all her wondrous face at once! The ground  
Reels and . . . [*suddenly occupying himself with his  
paper.*] These wrongs of theirs I have to plead!  
*The D.* [*to the Court.*] Nay, compliment enough!  
And kindness' self

Should pause before it wish me more such years.  
'Twas fortunate that thus, ere youth escaped,  
I tasted life's pure pleasure—one such, pure,  
Is worth a thousand, mixed—and youth's for pleasure:  
Mine is received; let my age pay for it.

*Gau.* So, pay, and pleasure paid for, thinks your  
Grace,  
Should never go together?

*Gui.* . . . . . How, Sir Gaucelme?  
Hurry one's feast down unenjoyingly  
At the snatched breathing-intervals of work?  
As good you saved it till the dull day's-end  
When, stiff and sleepy, appetite is gone!  
Eat first, then work upon the strength of it!

*The D.* True: you enable me to risk my Future,  
By giving me a Past beyond recall.  
I lived, a girl, one happy leisure year:  
Let me endeavour to be the Duchess now!  
And so,—what news, Sir Guibert, spoke you of?

[*As they advance a little, and GUIBERT speaks*  
—That gentleman?

*Val.* [*Aside.*] I feel her eyes on me!

*Gui.* [*to VALENCE.*] The Duchess, sir, inclines to hear  
your suit!  
Advance! He is from Cleves.

*Val.* [*coming forward.*] [*Aside.*] Their wrongs—their  
wrong!

*The D.* And you, sir, are from Cleves? How fresh  
in mind,  
The hour or two I passed at queenly Cleves!  
She entertained me bravely, but the best  
Of her good pageant seemed its standers-by,



## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

With insuppressive joy on every face!

What says my ancient, famous, happy Cleves?

*Val.* Take the truth, lady—you are made for truth!

So think my friends: nor do they less deserve  
The having you to take it, you shall think,  
When you know all—nay, when you only know  
How, on that day you recollect at Cleves,  
When the poor acquiescing multitude  
Who thrust themselves with all their woes apart  
Into unnoticed corners, that the few  
Their means sufficed to muster trappings for,  
Might fill the foreground, occupy your sight  
With joyous faces fit to bear away  
And boast of as a sample of all Cleves

—How, when to daylight these crept out once more,  
Clutching, unconscious, each his empty rags  
Whence the scant coin, which had not half bought  
bread,

That morn he shook forth, counted piece by piece,  
And, well-advisedly, on perfumes spent them  
To burn, or flowers to strew, before your path  
—How, when the golden flood of music and bliss  
Ebbd, as their moon retreated, and again  
Left the sharp black-point rocks of misery bare

—Then I, their friend, had only to suggest  
“Saw she the horror as she saw the pomp!”—  
And as one man they cried “He speaks the truth—  
“Show her the horror! Take from our own mouths  
“Our wrongs and show them, she will see them  
too!”

—This they cried, lady! I have brought the wrongs.

*The D.* Wrongs? Cleves has wrongs—apparent  
now and thus?

I thank you—in that paper?—Give it me!

*Val.* (There, Cleves!) In this! (What did I promise  
Cleves?)

Our weavers, clothiers, spinners are reduced  
Since . . . Oh, I crave your pardon—I forget  
I buy the privilege of this approach,

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

And promptly would discharge my debt. I lay  
This paper humbly at the Duchess' feet!

[Presenting GUIBERT's paper.]

*Gui.* Stay—for the present . . .

*The D.*

Stay, sir? I take aught

That teaches me their wrongs with greater pride  
Than this your Ducal circlet. Thank you, sir!

[*The DUCHESS reads hastily; then, turning to the Courtiers—*

What have I done to you? Your deed or mine  
Was it, this crowning me? I gave myself  
No more a title to your homage, no,  
Than church-flowers, born this season, wrote the  
words

In the saint's-book that sanctified them first.  
For such a flower, you plucked me—well, you erred—  
Well, 'twas a weed—remove the eye-sore quick!  
But should you not remember it has lain  
Steeped in the candles' glory, palely shrined,  
Nearer God's Mother than most earthly things?  
—That if't be faded 'tis with prayer's sole breath—  
That the one day it boasted was God's day?  
Still, I do thank you—had you used respect  
Here might I dwindle to my last white leaf,  
Here lose life's latest freshness, which even yet  
May yield some wandering insect rest and food:  
So, fling me forth, and—all is best for all!

[*After a pause.*] Prince Berthold, who art Juliers'  
Duke, it seems—

The King's choice, and the Emperor's, and the Pope's—  
Be mine, too! Take this people! Tell not me  
Of rescripts, precedents, authorities,  
—But take them, from a heart that yearns to give!  
Find out their love,—I could not; find their fear,—  
I would not; find their like,—I never shall,  
Among the flowers! [Taking off her coronet.]

Colombe of Ravestein

Thanks God she is no longer Duchess here!

*Val.* [*advancing to GUIBERT.*] Sir Guibert,—knight,  
they call you—this of mine

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

Is the first step I ever set at court.

You dared make me your instrument, I find;

For that, so sure as you and I are men,

We reckon to the utmost presently :

But as you are a courtier and I none,

Your knowledge may instruct me. I, already,

Have too far outraged, by my ignorance

Of courtier-ways, this lady, to proceed

A second step and risk addressing her

—I am degraded—you, let me address !

Out of her presence, all is plain enough

What I shall do—but in her presence, too,

Surely there's something proper to be done !

[*To the others.*] You, gentles, tell me if I guess  
aright—

May I not strike this man to earth ?

*The Courtiers.* [*as GUIBERT springs forward, with-  
holding him.*] Let go !

—The Clothiers' spokesman, Guibert ? Grace a churl ?

*The D.* [*to VALENCE.*] Oh, be acquainted with your  
party, sir !

He's of the oldest lineage Juliers boasts ;

A lion crests him for a cognisance ;

"Scorning to waver"—that's his scutcheon's word ;

His office with the new Duke—probably

The same in honour as with me ; or more,

By so much as this gallant turn deserves ;

He's now, I dare say, of a thousand times

The rank and influence that remain with her

Whose part you take ! So, lest for taking it

You suffer . . .

*Val.* I may strike him then to earth ?

*Gui.* [*falling on his knee.*] Great and dear lady,  
pardon me ! Hear once !

Believe me and be merciful—be just !

I could not bring myself to give that paper

Without a keener pang than I dared meet

—And so felt Clugnet here, and Maufroy here

—No one dared meet it. Protestation's cheap,—

But, if to die for you did any good,

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

[To GAUCELME.] Would not I die, sir? Say your worst of me!

But it does no good, that's the mournful truth.  
And since the hint of a resistance, even,  
Would just precipitate, on you the first,  
A speedier ruin—I shall not deny,  
Saving myself indubitable pain,  
I thought to give you pleasure (who might say?)  
By showing that your only subject found  
To carry the sad notice, was the man  
Precisely ignorant of its contents;  
A nameless, mere provincial advocate;  
One whom 'twas like you never saw before,  
Never would see again. All has gone wrong;  
But I meant right, God knows, and you, I trust!

*The D.* A nameless advocate, this gentleman?—  
—(I pardon you, Sir Guibert!)

*Gui.* [rising, to VALENCE.]—Sir, and you?—

*Val.* —Rejoice that you are lightened of a load.  
Now, you have only me to reckon with!

*The D.* One I have never seen, much less obliged?—

*Val.* Dare I speak, lady?

*The D.* Dare you! Heard you not  
I rule no longer?

*Val.* Lady, if your rule  
Were based alone on such a ground as these  
[Pointing to the Courtiers.

Could furnish you,—abjure it! They have hidden  
A source of true dominion from your sight.

*The D.* You hear them—no such source is left . . .

*Val.* Hear Cleves!  
Whose haggard craftsmen rose to starve this day,  
Starve now, and will lie down at night to starve,  
Sure of a like to-morrow—but as sure  
Of a most unlike morrow-after-that,  
Since end things must, end howsoe'er things may.  
What curbs the brute-force instinct in its hour?  
What makes, instead of rising, all as one,  
And teaching fingers, so expert to wield  
Their tool, the broadsword's play or carbine's trick,

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

—What makes that there's an easier help, they think,  
For you, whose name so few of them can spell,  
Whose face scarce one in every hundred saw,  
You simply have to understand their wrongs,  
And wrongs will vanish—so, still trades are plied,  
And swords lie rusting, and myself stand here?  
There is a vision in the heart of each  
Of justice, mercy, wisdom; tenderness  
To wrong and pain, and knowledge of its cure—  
And these, embodied in a woman's form  
That best transmits them, pure as first received,  
From God above her, to mankind below.  
Will you derive your rule from such a ground,  
Or rather hold it by the suffrage, say,  
Of this man—this—and this?

*The D.* [after a pause.] You come from Cleves—  
How many are at Cleves of such a mind?

*Val.* [from his paper.] “We, all the manufacturers  
of Cleves”—

*The D.* Or stay, sir—lest I seem too covetous—  
Are you my subject? such as you describe  
Am I to you—though to no other man?

*Val.* [from his paper.]—“Valence, ordained your  
Advocate at Cleves”—

*The D.* [replacing the coronet.] Then I remain Cleves’  
Duchess! Take you note,  
While Cleves but yields one subject of this stamp,  
I stand her lady till she waves me off!  
For her sake, all the Prince claims I withhold;  
Laugh at each menace; and, his power defying,  
Return his missive with its due contempt!

[Casting it away.]

*Gui.* [picking it up.]—Which to the Prince I will  
deliver, Lady,

[Note it down, Gaucelme]—with your message too!

*The D.* I think the office is a subject's, sir!  
—Either . . . how style you him?—my special guarder  
The Marshal's—for who knows but violence  
May follow the delivery!—Or, perhaps,  
My Chancellor's—for law may be to urge

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

On its receipt!—Or, even my Chamberlain's—  
For I may violate established form!

[To VALENCE.] Sir,—for the half hour till this service  
ends,

Will you become all these to me?

*Val.* [falling on his knee.] My Liege!

*The D.* Give me!

[*The Courtiers present their badges of office.*

[*Putting them by.*—Whatever was their virtue  
once,

They need new consecration! [*raising VALENCE.*] Are  
you mine?

—I will be Duchess yet! [*She retires.*

*The Courtiers.* Our Duchess yet!

A glorious lady! Worthy love and dread!

I'll stand by her,—and I, whate'er betide!

*Gui.* [to VALENCE.] Well done, well done, sir! I care  
not who knows,

You have done nobly, and I envy you—

Tho' I am but unfairly used, I think:

For when one gets a place like this I hold,

One gets too the remark that its mere wages,

The pay and the preferment, make our prize—

Talk about zeal and faith apart from these,

We're laughed at—much would zeal and faith subsist

Without these also! Yet, let these be stopped,

Our wages discontinue,—then, indeed,

Our zeal and faith, we hear on every side,

Are not released—having been pledged away

I wonder with what zeal and faith in turn?

Hard money purchased me my place! No, no—

I'm right, sir—but your wrong is better still,

If I had time and skill to argue it.

Therefore, I say, I'll serve you, how you please—

If you like,—fight you, as you seem to wish—

(The kinder of me that, in sober truth,

I never dreamed I did you any harm)—

*Gau.* —Or, kinder still, you'll introduce, no doubt,

His merits to the Prince who's just at hand,

And let no hint drop he's made Chancellor,

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

And Chamberlain, and Heaven knows what beside!

*Clug.* [to VALENCE.] You stare, young sir, and threaten! Let me say,

That at your age, when first I came to court,  
I was not much above a gentleman;

While now . . .

*Val.* —You are Head-Lackey? With your office  
I have not yet been graced, sir!

*Other Courtiers to Clug.* Let him talk!

Fidelity—disinterestedness—

Excuse so much! Men claimed my worship ever

Who, stanch and steadfastly . . .

*Enter ADOLF.*

*Adolf.* The Prince arrives!

*Courtiers.* Ha? How?

*Adolf.* He leaves his guard a stage behind  
At Aix, and enters almost by himself.

*1st Court.* The Prince! This foolish business puts  
all out!

*2nd Court.* Let Gaucelme speak first!

*3rd Court.* Better I began  
About the state of Juliers—should one say

All's prosperous and inviting him?

*4th Court.* —Or rather  
All's prostrate and imploring him!

*5th Court.* That's best!  
Where's the Cleves' paper, by the way?

*4th Court.* [to VALENCE.] Sir—sir—  
If you'll but give that paper—trust it me,  
I'll warrant . . .

*5th Court.* Softly, sir—the Marshal's duty!

*Clug.* Has not the Chamberlain a hearing first  
By virtue of his patent?

*Gau.* Patents?—Duties?  
All that, my masters, must begin again!

One word composes the whole controversy—  
We're simply now—the Prince's!

*The Others.* Ay—the Prince's!

# COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

*Enter SABYNE.*

*Sab.* Adolf! Bid . . . Oh, no time for ceremony!  
Where's whom our lady calls her only subject?  
She needs him! Who is here the Duchess's?

*Val.* [*starting from his reverie.*] Most gratefully I  
follow to her feet!

## ACT III

*Afternoon. SCENE.—The Vestibule.*

*Enter PRINCE BERTHOLD and MELCHIOR.*

*Berth.* A thriving little burgh this Juliers looks.  
[*Half-apart.*] Keep Juliers, and as good you kept  
Cologne:

Better try Aix, though!—

*Mel.* Please 't your Highness speak?

*Berth.* [*as before.*] Aix, Cologne, Frankfort,—Milan;  
—Rome!—

*Mel.* —The Grave

—More weary seems your Highness, I remark,  
Than sundry conquerors whose path I've watched  
Through fire and blood to any prize they gain.  
I could well wish you, for your proper sake,  
Had met some shade of opposition here  
—Found a blunt seneschal refuse unlock,  
Or a scared usher lead your steps astray.  
You must not look for next achievement's palm  
So easy: this will hurt your conquering!

*Berth.* My next? Ay—as you say, my next and next!  
Well, I am tired, that's truth, and moody too,  
This quiet entrance-morning; listen why!  
Our little burgh, now, Juliers—'tis indeed  
One link, however insignificant,  
Of the great chain by which I reach my hope—  
—A link I must secure; but otherwise,  
You'd wonder I esteem'd it worth my grasp.



## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

Just see what life is, with its shifts and turns !  
It happens now—this very nook—to be  
A place that once . . . but a short while since, neither—  
When I lived an ambiguous hanger-on  
Of foreign courts, and bore my claims about,  
Discarded by one kinsman, and the other  
A poor priest merely,—then, I say, this place  
Shone my ambition's object ; to be Duke—  
Seemed then what to be Emperor seems now.  
My rights were far from being judged as plain  
In those days as of late, I promise you—  
And 'twas my day-dream, Lady Colombe here  
Might e'en compound the matter, pity me,  
Be struck, say, with my chivalry and grace  
(I was a boy !)—bestow her hand at length,  
And make me Duke, in her right if not mine.  
Here am I, Duke confessed, at Juliers now !  
Hearken : if ever I be Emperor,  
Remind me what I felt and said to-day !

*Mel.* All this consoles a bookish man like me !  
—And so will weariness cling to you ! Wrong—  
Wrong ! Had you sought the Lady's court yourself,—  
Faced the redoubtables composing it,  
Flattered this, threatened that man, bribed the other,—  
Pleaded, by writ and word and deed, your cause,—  
Conquered a footing inch by painful inch,—  
And, after long years' struggle, pounced at last  
On her for prize,—the right life had been lived,  
And justice done to divers faculties  
Shut in that brow : yourself were visible  
As you stood victor, then ! whom now—(your pardon !)  
I am forced narrowly to search and see—  
So are you hid by helps—this Pope, your uncle—  
Your cousin, the other King ! You are a Mind,—  
They, Body : too much of mere legs-and-arms  
Obstructs the mind so ! Match these with their like—  
Match mind with mind !

*Berth.* And where's your mind to match ?  
They show me legs-and-arms to cope withal !  
I'd subjugate this city—where's its mind ?

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

[*The Courtiers enter slowly.*

*Mel.* Got out of sight when you came troops and all!  
And in its stead, here greets you flesh-and-blood—  
A smug œconomy of both, this first!

[*As OLUGNET bows obsequiously.*

Well done, gout, all considered!—I may go?

*Berth.* Help me receive them!

*Mel.*

Oh, they just will say

What yesterday at Aix their fellows said,—  
At Treves, the day before!—Sir Prince, my friend,  
Why do you let your life slip thus?—Mean time,  
I have my little Juliers to achieve—  
The understanding this tough Platonist,  
Your holy uncle disinters, Amelius—  
Lend me a company of horse and foot,  
To help me through his tractate—gain my Duchy!

*Berth.* And Empire, after that is gained, will be—?

*Mel.* To help me through your uncle's comment,  
Prince!

[*Goes.*

*Berth.* Ah? Well! he o'er-refines—the scholar's fault!  
How do I let my life slip? Say, this life,  
I lead now, differs from the common life  
Of other men in mere degree, not kind,  
Of joys and griefs,—still there is such degree—  
Mere largeness in a life is something, sure,—  
Enough to care about and struggle for,  
In this world: for this world, the Size of things;  
The Sort of things, for that to come, no doubt!  
A great is better than a little aim—  
And when I wooed Priscilla's rosy mouth  
And failed so, under that grey convent-wall,  
Was I more happy than I should be now

[*By this time, the Courtiers are ranged before him.*  
If failing of my Empire? Not a whit!  
—Here comes the Mind, it once had tasked me sore  
To baffle, but for my advantages!  
All's best as 'tis—these scholars talk and talk!

[*Seats himself.*

*The Courtiers.* Welcome our Prince to Juliers!—to  
his Heritage!

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

Our dutifullest service proffer we!

*Clug.* I, please your Highness, having exercised  
The function of Grand Chamberlain at Court,  
With much acceptance, as men testify . . .

*Berth.* I cannot greatly thank you, gentlemen!  
The Pope declares my claim to the Duchy founded  
On strictest justice; if you concede it, therefore,  
I do not wonder—and the kings my friends  
Protesting they will see such claim enforced,  
You easily may offer to assist us.

But there's a slight discretionary power  
To serve me in the matter, you've had long,  
Though late you use it. This is well to say—  
But could you not have said it months ago?  
I'm not denied my own Duke's truncheon, true—  
'Tis flung me—I stoop down, and from the ground  
Pick it, with all you placid standers-by—  
And now I have it, gems and mire at once.  
Grace go with it to my soiled hands, you say!

*Gui.* (By Paul, the Advocate our doughty friend  
Outs the best figure!)

*Gau.* If our ignorance  
May have offended, sure our loyalty . . .

*Berth.* Loyalty? Yours?—Oh—of yourselves you  
speak!

—I mean the Duchess all this time, I hope!  
And since I have been forced repeat my claims  
As if they never had been made before,  
As I began, so must I end, it seems.  
The formal answer to the grave demand—  
What says the lady?

*Courtiers* [one to another.] *1st Court.* Marshal!

*2nd Court.* Orator!

*Gui.* A variation of our mistress' way!  
Wipe off his boots' dust, Clugnet?—that, he waits!

*1st Court.* Your place!

*2nd Court.* Just now it was your own!

*Gui.* The devil's!

*Berth.* [to GUIBERT.] Come forward, friend—you  
with the paper, there!

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

Is Juliers the first city I've obtained?  
 By this time, I may boast proficiency  
 In each decorum of the circumstance!  
 Give it me as she gave it—the petition  
 (Demand, you style it)—what's required, in brief?  
 What title's reservation, appanage's  
 Allowance?—I heard all at Treves, last week!

*Gau.* [to GUIBERT.] "Give it him as she gave it!"

*Gui.* And why not?

[To BERTHOLD.] The lady crushed your summons thus  
 together,

And bade me, with the very greatest scorn  
 So fair a frame could hold, inform you . . .

*Courtiers.*

Stop—

Idiot!—

*Gui.* —Inform you she denied your claim,  
 Defied yourself! (I tread upon his heel,  
 The blustering Advocate!)

*Berth.*

By heaven and earth!

Dare you jest, sir?

*Gui.*

Did they at Treves, last week?

*Berth.* [starting up.] Why then, I look much bolder  
 than I knew,

And you prove better actors than I thought—  
 Since, as I live, I took you as you entered  
 For just so many dearest friends of mine,  
 Fled from the sinking to the rising power  
 —The sneaking'st crew, in short, I e'er despised!  
 Whereas, I am alone here for the moment—  
 With every soldier left behind at Aix!  
 Silence? That means the worst—I thought as much!  
 What follows next then?

*Courtiers.*

Gracious Prince—he raves!

*Gui.* He asked the truth and why not get the  
 truth?

*Berth.* Am I a prisoner? Speak, will somebody?  
 —But why stand paltering with imbeciles?  
 Let me see her, or . . .

*Gui.*

Her, without her leave,  
 Shall no one see—she's Duchess yet!

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

*Courtiers. [Footsteps without, as they are disputing.]*

Good chance!

She's here—the Lady Colombe's self

*Berth.*

'Tis well!

[*Aside.*] Array a handful thus against my world?

Not ill done, truly! Were not this a mind

To match one's mind with? Colombe!—Let us wait!

I failed so, under that grey convent-wall!

She comes!

*Gui.*

The Duchess! Strangers, range yourselves!

[*As the DUCHESS enters in conversation with  
VALENCE, BERTHOLD and the Courtiers  
fall back a little.*]

*The D.* Presagefully it beats, presagefully,  
My heart—the right is Berthold's and not mine!

*Val.* Grant that he has the right, dare I mistrust  
Your power to acquiesce so patiently  
As you believe, in such a dream-like change  
Of fortune—change abrupt, profound, complete?

*The D.* Ah, the first bitterness is over now!  
Bitter I may have felt it to confront  
The truth, and ascertain those natures' value  
I had so counted on—that was a pang—  
But I did bear it, and the worst is over:  
Let the Prince take them!

*Val.* —And take Juliers too?  
—Your People without crosses, wands, and chains—  
Only with hearts?

*The D.* There I feel guilty, sir!  
I cannot give up what I never had:  
For these I ruled, not them—these stood between.  
Shall I confess, sir? I have heard by stealth  
Of Berthold from the first: more news and more;  
Closer and closer swam the thunder-cloud,  
But I was safely housed with these, I knew!  
At times, when to the casement I would turn,  
At a bird's passage or a flower-trail's play,  
I caught the storm's red glimpses on its edge—  
Yet I was sure some one of all these friends  
Would interpose—I followed the bird's flight,

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

Or plucked the flower—some one would interpose!

*Val.* Not one thought on the People—and Cleves there!

*The D.* So, sadly conscious my real sway was missed,

Its shadow goes without so much regret:

Else could I not again thus calmly bid you,

Answer Prince Berthold!

*Val.*

Then you acquiesce?

*The D.* Remember over whom it was I ruled!

*Gui.* [*stepping forward.*] Prince Berthold, yonder, craves an audience, Lady!

*The D.* [*to VALENCE.*] I only have to turn, and I shall face

Prince Berthold! Oh, my very heart is sick!

It is the daughter of a line of Dukes,

This scornful insolent adventurer

Will bid depart from my dead father's halls

I shall not answer him—dispute with him—

But, as he bids, depart! Prevent it, sir!

Sir—but a mere day's respite! Urge for me

—What I shall call to mind I should have urged

When time's gone by—'twill all be mine, you urge!

A day—an hour—that I myself may lay

My rule down! 'Tis too sudden—must not be!

The world's to hear of it! Once done—for ever!

How will it read, sir? How be sung about?

Prevent it!

*Berth.* [*approaching.*] Your frank indignation, Lady. Cannot escape me! Overbold I seem—

But somewhat should be pardoned my surprise,

At this reception,—this defiance, rather.

And if, for their and your sakes, I rejoice

Your virtues could inspire a trusty few

To make such gallant stand in your behalf,

I cannot but be sorry, for my own,

Your friends should force me to retrace my steps,

Since I no longer am permitted speak

After the pleasant peaceful course prescribed

No less by courtesy than relationship

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

Which, if you once forgot, I still remember.  
But never must attack pass unrepelled.  
Suffer, that through you, I demand of these,  
Who controverts my claim to Juliers?

*The D.*

—Me,

You say, you do not speak to—

*Berth.*

Of your subjects

I ask, then: whom do you accredit? Where  
Stand those should answer?

*Val. [advancing].*

The Lady is alone!

*Berth.* Alone, and thus? So weak and yet so bold?

*Val.* I said she was alone—

*Berth.*

—And weak, I said.

*Val.* When is man strong until he feels alone?

It was some lonely strength at first, be sure,  
Created organs, such as those you seek,  
By which to give its varied purpose shape—  
And, naming the selected ministrants,  
Took sword, and shield, and sceptre,—each, a man!  
That strength performed its work and passed its way:  
You see our Lady: there, the old shapes stand!  
—A Marshal, Chamberlain, and Chancellor—  
“Be helped their way, into their death put life  
“And find advantage!”—so you counsel us:  
But let strength feel alone, seek help itself,—  
And, as the inland-hatched sea-creature hunts  
The sea's breast out,—as, littered 'mid the waves,  
The desert-brute makes for the desert's joy,  
So turns our lady to her true resource,  
Passing o'er hollow fictions, worn-out types,  
—So, I am first her instinct fastens on!  
And prompt I say, so clear as heart can speak,  
The People will not have you; nor shall have!  
It is not merely I shall go bring Cleves  
And fight you to the last,—though that does much,  
And men and children,—ay, and women too,  
Fighting for home, are rather to be feared  
Than mercenaries fighting for their pay—  
But, say you beat us, since such things have been,  
And, where this Juliers laughed, you set your foot

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

Upon a streaming bloody plash—what then?  
Stand you the more our Lord that there you stand?  
Lord it o'er troops whose force you concentrate,  
A pillared flame whereto all ardours tend—  
Lord it 'mid priests whose schemes you amplify,  
A cloud of smoke 'neath which all shadows brood—  
But never, in this gentle spot of earth,  
Can you become our Colombe, our play-queen,  
For whom, to furnish lilies for her hair,  
We'd pour our veins forth to enrich the soil!  
—Our conqueror? Yes!—Our despot? Yes!—Our  
Duke?

Know yourself, know us!

*Berth.* [*who has been in thought.*] Know your lady,  
also!

[*Very deferentially.*—To whom I needs must exculpate  
myself

From having made a rash demand, at least.  
Wherefore to you, sir, who appear to be  
Her chief adviser, I submit my claims, [*Giving papers*  
But, this step taken, take no further step,  
Until the Duchess shall pronounce their worth.  
Here be our meeting-place; at night, its time:  
Till when I humbly take the Lady's leave!

[*He withdraws. As the DUCHESS turns to VALENCE,*  
*the Courtiers interchange glances and come for-*  
*ward a little.*

*1st Court.* So, this was their device!

*2nd Court.* No bad device!

*3rd Court.* You'd say they love each other, Guibert's  
friend

From Cleves, and she, the Duchess!

*4th Court.* —And moreover,  
That all Prince Berthold comes for, is to help  
Their loves!

*5th Court.* Pray, Guibert, what is next to do?

*Gui.* [*advancing.*] I laid my office at the Duchess'  
foot—

*Others.* And I—and I—and I!

*The D.* I took them, sirs!



## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

*Gui.* [*Apart to VALENCE.*] And now, sir, I am  
simple knight again—

Guibert, of the great ancient house, as yet  
That never bore affront : whate'er your birth,—  
As things stand now, I recognise yourself  
(If you'll accept experience of some date)  
As like to be the leading man o' the time,  
Therefore as much above me now, as I  
Seemed above you this morning. Then, I offered  
To fight you : will you be as generous  
And now fight me ?

*Val.* Ask when my life is mine !

*Gui.* ('Tis hers now !)

*Clug.* [*Apart to VALENCE, as Guibert turns from him.*] You, sir, have insulted me

Grossly,—will grant me, too, the selfsame favour  
You've granted him, just now, I make no question ?

*Val.* I promise you, as him, sir !

*Clug.* Do you so ?

Handsomely said ! I hold you to it, sir !

You'll get me reinstated in my office

As you will Guibert !

*The D.* I would be alone !

[*They begin to retire slowly : as VALENCE is about to follow—*

Alone, sir—only with my heart,—you stay !

*Gau.* You hear that ? Ah, light breaks upon me !  
Cleves—

It was at Cleves some man harangued us all—  
With great effect,—so those who listened said,  
My thoughts being busy elsewhere : was this he ?  
Guibert,—your strange, disinterested man !

Your uncorrupted, if uncourtly friend !  
The modest worth you mean to patronise !  
He cares about no Duchesses, not he—

His sole contest is with the wrongs of Cleves !  
What, Guibert ? What, it breaks on you at last ?

*Gui.* Would this hall's floor were a mine's roof !—  
I'd back

And in her very face . . .

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

*Gau.* Apply the match  
That fired the train,—and where would you be, pray?  
*Gui.* With him!

*Gau.* Stand, rather, safe outside with me!  
The mine's charged—shall I furnish you the match  
And place you properly?—To the ante-chamber!

*Gui.* Can you?

*Gau.* Try me!—Your friend's in fortune!

*Gui.* Quick—  
To the ante-chamber!—He is pale with bliss!

*Gau.* No wonder! Mark her eyes!

*Gui.* To the ante-chamber!  
[*The Courtiers retire.*]

*The D.* Sir, could you know all you have done  
for me

You were content! You spoke, and I am saved!

*Val.* Be not too sanguine, Lady! Ere you dream,  
That transient flush of generosity  
Fades off, perchance! The man, beside, is gone,—  
Whom we might bend; but see the papers here—  
Inalterably his requirement stays,  
And cold hard words have we to deal with now.  
In that large eye there seemed a latent pride,  
To self-denial not incompetent,  
But very like to hold itself dispensed  
From such a grace—however, let us hope!  
He is a noble spirit in noble form!  
I wish he less had bent that brow to smile  
As with the fancy how he could subject  
Himself upon occasion to—himself!  
From rudeness, violence, you rest secure;  
But do not think your Duchy rescued yet!

*The D.* You,—who have opened a new world to me,  
Will never take the faded language up  
Of that I leave? My Duchy—keeping it,  
Or losing it—is that my sole world now?

*Val.* Ill have I spoken if you thence despise  
Juliers; although the lowest, on true grounds,  
Be worth more than the highest rule, on false:  
Aspire to rule, on the true grounds!

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

*The D.*

Nay, hear—

False, I will never—rash, I would not be!  
This is indeed my Birthday—soul and body,  
Its hours have done on me the work of years.  
You hold the Requisition: ponder it!  
If I have right— my duty's plain: if He—  
Say so—nor ever change a tone of voice!  
At night you meet the Prince—meet me at eve;  
Till when, farewell! This discomposes you?  
Believe in your own nature, and its force  
Of renovating mine. I take my stand  
Only as under me the earth is firm—  
So, prove the first step stable, all will be!  
That first, I choose—[*laying her hand on his.*—the  
next to take, choose you! [She withdraws.

*Val.* [after a pause.] What drew down this on me!

On me—dead once—

She thus bids live,—since all I hitherto  
Thought dead in me, youth's ardours and emprise,  
Burst into life before her, as she bids  
Who needs them!—Whither will this reach, where  
end?

Her hand's print burns on mine . . . Yet she's above—  
So very far above me! All's too plain—  
I served her when the others sank away,  
And she rewards me as such souls reward—  
The changed voice, the suffusion of the cheek,  
The eye's acceptance, the expressive hand—  
—Reward, that's little, in her generous thought,  
Though all to me . . .

I cannot so disclaim

Heaven's gift, nor call it other than it is!  
She loves me!

[*Looking at the Prince's papers.*—Which love, these,  
perchance, forbid!

Can I decide against myself—pronounce  
She is the Duchess and no mate for me?  
—Cleves, help me! Teach me,—every haggard face,—  
To sorrow and endure! I will do right  
Whatever be the issue—help me, Cleves!

# COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

## ACT IV

*Evening. SCENE.—An Ante-chamber.*

*Enter the Courtiers.*

*Mau.* Now then, that we may speak—how spring  
this mine?

*Gau.* Is Guibert ready for its match? He cools!  
Not so friend Valence with the Duchess there!  
“Stay, Valence—are not you my better self?”  
And her cheek mantled—

*Gui.* Well, she loves him, sir—  
And more,—since you will have it I grow cool,—  
She's right: he's worth it.

*Gau.* For his deeds to-day?  
Say so!

*Gui.* What should I say beside?

*Gau.* Not this—  
For friendship's sake leave this for me to say—  
That we're the dupes of an egregious cheat!  
This plain, unpractised suitor, who found way  
To the Duchess thro' the merest die's turn-up—  
A year ago, had seen her and been seen,  
Loved and been loved—

*Gui.* Impossible!

*Gau.* —Nor say,  
How sly and exquisite a trick, moreover,  
Was this which—taking not their stand on facts  
Boldly, for that had been endurable,  
But, worming in their way by craft, they choose  
Resort to, rather,—and which you and we,  
Sheep-like, assist them in the playing off!  
The Duchess thus parades him as preferred,  
Not on the honest ground of preference,  
Seeing first, liking more, and there an end—  
But as we all had started equally,  
And at the close of a fair race he proved  
The only valiant, sage, and loyal man.

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

And she, too, with the pretty fits and starts,—  
The careless, winning, candid ignorance  
Of what the Prince might challenge or forego—  
She had a hero in reserve! What risk  
Ran she? This deferential easy Prince  
Who brings his claims for her to ratify  
—He's just her puppet for the nonce! You'll see,—  
Valence pronounces, as is equitable,  
Against him: off goes the confederate:  
As equitably, Valence takes her hand!

*The Chancellor.* You run too fast—her hand, no  
subject takes!

Do not our Archives hold her father's Will?  
That will provides against such accident,  
And gives next heir, Prince Berthold, the reversion  
Of Juliers, which she forfeits, wedding so.

*Gau.* I know that, well as you,—but does the Prince?  
Knows Berthold, think you, that this plan, he helps,  
For Valence's ennoblement,—would end,  
If crowned with the success which seems its due,  
In making him the very thing he plays,  
The actual Duke of Juliers? All agree  
That Colombe's title waived or set aside,  
He is next heir.

*The Chan.* Incontrovertibly!

*Gau.* Guibert, your match, now, to the train!

*Gui.* Enough!

I'm with you—selfishness is best again!  
I thought of turning honest—what a dream!  
Let's wake now!

*Gau.* Selfish, friend, you never were—  
'Twas but a series of revenges taken  
On your unselfishness for prospering ill.  
But now that you're grown wiser, what's our course?

*Gui.* —Wait, I suppose, till Valence weds our Lady,  
And then, if we must needs revenge ourselves,  
Apprise the Prince—

*Gau.* —The Prince, ere then dismissed  
With thanks for playing his mock part so well?  
Tell the Prince now, sir! Ay, this very night—

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

Ere he accepts his dole and goes his way,  
Explain how such a marriage makes him Duke,  
Then trust his gratitude for the surprise!

*Gui.* —Our Lady wedding Valence all the same  
As if the penalty were undisclosed!

Good! If she loves, she'll not disown her love,  
Throw Valence up—I wonder you see that!

*Gau.* The shame of it—the suddenness and shame!  
Within her, the inclining heart—without,  
A terrible array of witnesses—

With Valence by, to keep her to her word,  
And Berthold's indignation or disgust—  
We'll try it!—Not that we can venture much:  
Her confidence we've lost for ever— Berthold's  
Is all to gain!

*Gui.* To-night, then, venture we!  
Yet—if lost confidence might be renewed?

*Gau.* Never in noble natures! With the base ones,—  
Twist off the crab's claw, wait a smarting-while,  
And something grows and grows and gets to be  
A mimic of the lost joint, just so like  
As keeps in mind it never, never will  
Replace its predecessor! Crabs do that  
But lop the Lion's foot—and

*Gui.* To the Prince!

*Gau.* [*Aside.*] And come what will to the lion's foot,  
I pay you  
My cat's-paw, as I long have yearned to pay!  
[*Aloud.*] Footsteps . . Himself! 'Tis Valence breaks  
on us!

Exulting that their scheme succeeds!—We'll hence—  
And perfect ours! Consult the Archives, first—  
Then, fortified with knowledge, seek the Hall!

*Clug.* [*to GAUCELME as they retire.*] You have not  
smiled so since your father died!

*As they retire, enter VALENCE with papers.*

*Val.* So must it be! I have examined these  
With scarce a palpitating heart—so calm,

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

Keeping her image almost wholly off,  
Setting upon myself determined watch,  
Repelling to the uttermost his claims,  
And the result is . . . all men would pronounce  
Am not I, only, the result to be—  
Berthold is Heir; she has no shade of right  
To the distinction which divided us,  
But, suffered to rule first I know not why,  
Her rule connived at by those Kings and Popes,  
To serve some devil's-purpose,—now 'tis gained,  
Whate'er it was, the rule expires as well.  
—Valence, this rupture . . . selfish can it be?  
Eject it from your heart, her home!—It stays!  
Ah, the brave world that opens on us both!  
. . . Do my poor townsmen so esteem it? Cleves,—  
I need not your pale faces! This, reward  
For service done to you? Too horrible!  
I never served you—'twas myself I served!  
Nay—served not—rather saved from punishment  
Which, had I failed you then, would plague me now!  
My life continues yours, and your life, mine—  
But if, to take God's gift, I swerve no step—  
Cleves!—if I breathe no prayer for it—if she,  
[*Footsteps without.*]  
Colombe, that comes now, freely gives herself—  
Will Cleves require, that, turning thus to her,  
I . . .

*Enter* PRINCE BERTHOLD.

—Pardon, sir,—I did not look for you  
Till night, in the Hall; nor have as yet declared  
My judgment to the Lady!

*Berth.* . . . So I hoped.

*Val.* And yet I scarcely know why that should  
check

The frank disclosure of it first to you—  
What her right seems, and what, in consequence,  
She will decide on—

*Berth.* That I need not ask,

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

*Val.* You need not: I have proved the Lady's mind—  
And, justice being to do, dare act for her.

*Berth.* Doubtless she has a very noble mind!

*Val.* Oh, never fear but she'll in each conjuncture  
Bear herself bravely; she no whit depends  
On circumstance; as she adorns a throne,  
She had adorned . . .

*Berth.* . . . A cottage—in what book  
Have I read that, of every queen that lived?  
A throne? You have not been instructed, sure,  
To forestall my request?

*Val.* 'Tis granted, sir—  
My heart instructs me. I have scrutinized  
Your claims . . .

*Berth.* Ah—claims, you mean, at first preferred!  
I come, before the hour appointed me,  
To pray you let those claims at present rest—  
In favour of a new and stronger one.

*Val.* You shall not need a stronger: on the part  
Of the lady, all you offer I accept,  
Since one clear right suffices: yours is clear.  
Propose!

*Berth.* I offer her my hand.

*Val.* Your hand?

*Berth.* A Duke's, yourself say; and, at no far time,  
Something here whispers me—the Emperor's.  
The Lady's mind is noble; which induced  
This seizure of occasion ere my claims  
Were—settled, let us amicably say!

*Val.* Your hand!

*Berth.* (He will fall down and kiss it next!)  
Sir, this astonishment's too flattering—  
Nor must you hold your mistress' worth so cheap!  
Enhance it, rather,—urge that blood is blood—  
The daughter of the Burgraves, Landgraves, Markgraves,  
Remains their daughter; I shall scarce gainsay!  
Elsewhere or here, the Lady needs must rule:  
Like the Imperial crown's great chrysoprase,  
They talk of—somewhat out of keeping there,  
And yet no jewel for a meaner cap!



## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

*Val.* You wed the Duchess?

*Berth.*

Cry you mercy, friend!

Will the match influence many fortunes here?

A natural solicitude enough!

Be certain, no bad chance it proves for you.

However high you take your present stand,

There's prospect of a higher still remove—

For Juliers will not be my resting-place,

And, when I have to choose a substitute

To rule the little burgh, I'll think of you.

You need not give your mates a character!

And yet I doubt your fitness to supplant

The grey smooth Chamberlain—he'd hesitate

A doubt his lady could demean herself

So low as to accept me. Courage, sir!

I like your method better—feeling's play

Is franker much, and flatters me beside.

*Val.* I am to say, you love her?

*Berth.*

Say that too!

Love has no great concernment, thinks the world,

With a Duke's marriage—How go precedents

In Juliers' story—how use Juliers' Dukes?

I see you have them here in goodly row;

(Yon must be Luitpold,—ay, a stalwart sire!)

—Say, I have been arrested suddenly

In my ambition's course, its rocky course,

By this sweet flower—I fain would gather it

And then proceed—so say and speedily—

—(Nor stand there like Duke Luitpold's brazen self!)

Enough, sir: you possess my mind, I think.

This is my claim, the others being withdrawn,

And to this, be it that, in the Hall to-night,

Your Lady's answer comes; till when, farewell!

[*He retires.*]

*Val.* [after a pause.] The heavens and earth stay as  
they were—my heart

Beats as it beat—the truth remains the truth!

What falls away, then, if not faith in her?

Was it my faith, that she could estimate

Love's value,—and, such faith still guiding me,

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

Dare I now test her?—or grew faith so strong  
Solely because no power of test was mine?

*Enter the DUCHESS.*

*The D.* My fate, sir! Ah, you turn away—all's  
over!

But you are sorry for me—be not so!  
What I might have become, and never was,  
Regret with me; what I have merely been,  
Rejoice I am no longer; what I seem  
Beginning now, in my new state, to be,  
Hope that I am,—for, once my rights proved void,  
This heavy roof seems easy to exchange  
For the blue sky outside—my lot henceforth!

*Val.* And what a lot is Berthold's!

*The D.* How of him?

*Val.* He gathers earth's whole good into his arms,  
Standing, as man, now, stately, strong and wise—  
Marching to fortune, not surprised by her:  
One great aim, like a guiding-star, above—  
Which tasks strength, wisdom, stateliness, to lift  
His manhood to the height that takes the prize;  
A prize not near—lest overlooking earth  
He rashly spring to seize it—nor remote,  
So that he rests upon his path content:  
But day by day, while shimmering grows shine,  
And the faint circlet prophesies the orb,  
He sees so much as, just evolving these,  
The stateliness, the wisdom and the strength,  
To due completion, will suffice this life,  
And lead him at his grandest to the grave.  
After this star, out of a night he springs;  
A beggar's cradle for the throne of thrones  
He quits, so, mounting, feels each step he mounts,  
Nor, as from each to each exultingly  
He passes, overleaps one grade of joy.  
This, for his own good:—with the world, each gift  
Of God and man,—Reality, Tradition,  
Fancy and Fact—so well environ him,

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

That as a mystic panoply they serve—  
Of force, untenanted, to awe mankind,  
And work his purpose out with half the world,  
While he, their master, dexterously slipt  
From such encumbrance, is meantime employed  
With his own prowess on the other half.  
Thus shall he prosper, every day's success  
Adding, to what is He, a solid strength—  
An æry might to what encircles him,  
Till at the last, so life's routine lends help,  
That as the Emperor only breathes and moves,  
His shadow shall be watched, his step or stalk  
Become a comfort or a portent; how  
He trails his ermine take significance,—  
Till even his power shall cease to be most power,  
And men shall dread his weakness more, nor dare  
Peril their earth its bravest, first and best,  
Its typified invincibility.  
So shall he go on, greatening, till he ends  
The man of men, the spirit of all flesh,  
The fiery centre of an earthy world!

*The D.* Some such a fortune I had dreamed should rise  
Out of my own—that is, above my power  
Seemed other, greater potencies to stretch—

*Val.* For you?

*The D.* It was not I moved there, I think:  
But one I could,—though constantly beside,  
And aye approaching,—still keep distant from,  
And so adore. 'Twas a man moved there!

*Val.* Who?

*The D.* I felt the spirit, never saw the face!

*Val.* See it! 'Tis Berthold's! He enables you  
To realise your vision!

*The D.* Berthold?

*Val.* Duke—  
Emperor to be: he proffers you his hand.

*The D.* Generous and princely!

*Val.* He is all of this.

*The D.* Thanks, Berthold, for my father's sake—no  
hand

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

Degrades me!

*Val.* You accept the proffered hand?

*The D.* That he should love me!

*Val.* "Loved" I did not say!

Had that been—love might so incline the Prince  
To the world's good, the world that's at his foot,—  
I do not know, this moment, I should dare  
Desire that you refused the world—and Cleves—  
The sacrifice he asks!

*The D.* Not love me, sir?

*Val.* He scarce affirmed it.

*The D.* May not deeds affirm?

*Val.* What does he? . . . Yes—yes—very much he  
does!

All the shame saved, he thinks, and sorrow saved—  
Immitigable sorrow, so he thinks,—  
Sorrow that's deeper than we dream, perchance!

*The D.* Is not this love?

*Val.* So very much he does!

For look, you can descend now gracefully—  
All doubts are banished, that the world might have,  
Or worst, the doubts yourself, in after-time,  
May call up of your heart's sincereness now:  
To such, reply, "I could have kept my rule—  
"Increased it to the utmost of my dreams—  
"Yet I abjured it!" This, he does for you:  
It is munificently much!

*The D.* Still "much!"

But why is it not love, sir? Answer me!

*Val.* Because not one of Berthold's words and looks  
Had gone with love's presentment of a flower  
To the beloved: because bold confidence,  
Open superiority, free pride—  
Love owns not, yet were all that Berthold owned:  
Because where reason, even, finds no flaw,  
Unerringly a lover's instinct may.

*The D.* You reason, then, and doubt?

*Val.* I love, and know.

*The D.* You love?—How strange! I never cast a  
thought

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

On that! Just see our selfishness—you seemed  
So much my own . . . I had no ground—and yet,  
I never dreamed another might divide  
My power with you, much less exceed it!

*Val.* Lady,  
I am yours wholly!

*The D.* Oh, no, no, not mine!  
'Tis not the same now, never more can be!  
—Your first love, doubtless! Well, what's gone from  
me?

What have I lost in you?

*Val.* My heart replies—  
No loss there! . . . So to Berthold back again!  
This offer of his hand, he bids me make—  
Its obvious magnitude is well to weigh!

*The D.* She's . . . yes, she must be very fair for  
you!

*Val.* I am a simple Advocate of Cleves.

*The D.* You! With the heart and brain that so  
helped me,

I fancied them exclusively my own,  
Yet find are subject to a stronger sway!  
She must be . . . tell me, is she very fair?

*Val.* Most fair, beyond conception or belief!

*The D.* Black eyes?—no matter! Colombe, the  
world leads

Its life without you, whom your friends professed  
The only woman—see how true they spoke!  
One lived this while, who never saw your face,  
Nor heard your voice—unless. . . . Is she from Cleves?

*Val.* Cleves knows her well!

*The D.* Ah—just a fancy, now!  
When you poured forth the wrongs of Cleves,—I said,  
—Thought, that is, afterward . . .

*Val.* You thought of me?

*The D.* Of what else? Only such great cause, I  
thought,

For such effect—see what true love can do!  
Cleves is his love!—I almost fear to ask  
. . . Nor will not! This is idling—to our work!

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

Admit before the Prince, without reserve,  
My claims misgrounded; then may follow better  
. . . When you poured out Cleves' wrongs impetuously,  
Was she in your mind?

*Val.* All done was done for her—  
—To humble me!

*The D.* She will be proud at least!

*Val.* She?

*The D.* When you tell her!

*Val.* That will never be!

*The D.* How—are there sweeter things you hope to  
tell?

No, sir! You counselled me,—I counsel you  
In the one point I—any woman—can!  
Your worth, the first thing; let her own come next—  
Say what you did through her, and she through you—  
The praises of her beauty afterward!  
Will you?

*Val.* I dare not!

*The D.* Dare not?

*Val.* She I love

Suspects not such a love in me.

*The D.* You jest!

*Val.* The lady is above me and away!

Not only the brave form, and the bright mind,  
And the great heart, combine to press me low—  
But all the world calls rank divides us.

*The D.* Rank?

Now grant me patience! Here's a man declares  
Oracularly in another's case—

Sees the true value and the false, for them—

Nay, bids them see it, and they straight do see!

You called my court's love worthless—so it turned:

I threw away as dross my heap of wealth,

And here you stickle for a piece or two!

First—has she seen you?

*Val.* Yes!

*The D.* She loves you, then.

*Val.* One flash of hope burst—then succeeded  
night—

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

And all's at darkest now. Impossible!

*The D.* We'll try: you are—so to speak—my subject  
yet?

*Val.* As ever—to the death!

*The D.* Obey me, then!

*Val.* I must!

*The D.* Approach her, and . . . No! First of all  
Get more assurance; "my instructress," say,  
"Was great, descended from a line of kings,  
"And even fair"—(wait why I say this folly)—  
"She said, of all men, none for eloquence,  
"Courage, and (what cast even these to shade)  
"The heart they sprung from,—none deserved like him  
"Who saved her at her need—if she said this,  
"What should not one I love, say?"

*Val.* Heaven—this hope—  
Oh, lady, you are filling me with fire!

*The D.* Say this!—nor think I bid you cast aside  
One touch of all that awe and reverence!  
Nay—make her proud for once to heart's content  
That all this wealth of heart and soul's her own!  
Think you are all of this,—and, thinking it,  
. . . (Obey!)

*Val.* I cannot choose!

*The D.* Then, kneel to her!  
[*VALENCE sinks on his knee.*]

I dream!

*Val.* Have mercy! Yours, unto the death,—  
I have obeyed. Despise, and let me die.

*The D.* Alas, sir, is it to be ever thus?  
Even with you as with the world? I know  
This morning's service was no vulgar deed  
Whose motive, once it dares avow itself,  
Explains all done and infinitely more,  
So takes the shelter of a nobler cause.  
Your service named its true source,—loyalty!  
The rest's unsaid again. The Duchess bids you,  
Rise, sir! The Prince's words were in debate.

*Val.* [*rising.*] Rise! Truth, as ever, Lady, comes  
from you!

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

I should rise—I that spoke for Cleves, can speak  
For Man—yet tremble now, that stood firm then!  
I laughed—for 'twas past tears—that Cleves should  
starve

With all hearts beating loud the infamy,  
And no tongue daring trust as much to air!  
Yet here, where all hearts speak, shall I be mute?  
Oh lady, for your own sake look on me!  
On all I am, and have, and do—heart, brain,  
Body and soul,—this Valence and his gifts!  
I was proud once—I saw you—and they sank,  
So that each magnified a thousand times  
Were nothing to you—but such nothingness  
Would a crown gild it, or a sceptre prop,  
A treasure speed, a laurel-wreath enhance?  
What is my own desert? But should your love  
Have . . . there's no language helps here . . . singled me,—  
Then—Oh, that wild word “then!”—be just to love,  
In generosity its attribute!  
Love, since you pleased to love! All's cleared—a stage  
For trial of the question kept so long  
For you—Is Love or Vanity the best?  
You, solve it for the world's sake—you, speak first  
What all will shout one day—you, vindicate  
Our earth and be its angel! All is said.  
Lady, I offer nothing—I am yours,  
But for the cause' sake, look on me and him  
And speak!

*The D.* I have received the Prince's message:  
Say, I prepare my answer!

*Val.* Take me, Cleves!

[*He withdraws.*]

*The D.* Mournful—that nothing's what it calls itself!  
Devotion, zeal, faith, loyalty—mere love!  
And, love in question, what may Berthold's be?  
I did ill to mistrust the world so soon—  
Already was this Berthold at my side!  
The valley-level has its hawks, no doubt:  
May not the rock-top have its eagles, too?  
Yet Valence . . . let me see his Rival then!



# COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

## ACT V

*Night. SCENE.—The Hall.*

*Enter BERTHOLD and MELCHIOR.*

*Mel.* And here you wait the matter's issue?

*Berth.* Here.

*Mel.* I don't regret I shut Amelius, then!  
But tell me, on this grand disclosure,—how  
Behaved our spokesman with the forehead?

*Berth.* Oh,  
Turned out no better than the foreheadless—  
Was dazzled not so very soon—that's all!  
For my part, this is scarce the hasty, showy,  
Chivalrous measure you give me credit of!  
Perhaps I had the fancy,—but 'tis gone—  
—Let her commence the unfriended innocent,  
And carry wrongs about from court to court?  
No, truly! The least shake of Fortune's sand,  
—My uncle-Pope chokes in a coughing-fit,  
King Philip takes a fancy to blue eyes,—  
And wondrously her claims would brighten up!  
Forth comes a new gloss on the ancient law,  
O'er-looked provisoes, past o'er premises,  
Follow in plenty—No—'tis the safer step.  
The hour beneath the convent-wall is lost—  
Juliers and she, once mine, are ever mine.

*Mel.* Which is to say, you, losing heart already,  
Elude the adventure!

*Berth.* Not so—or, if so—  
Why not confess at once, that I advise  
None of our kingly craft and guild just now  
To lay, one moment, down their privilege  
With the notion they can any time at pleasure  
Retake it—that may turn out hazardous!  
We seem, in Europe, pretty well at end  
O' the night, with our great masque: those favoured few  
Who keep the chamber's top, and honour's chance

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

Of the early evening, may retain their place  
And figure as they list till out of breath.  
But it is growing late; and I observe  
A dim grim kind of tipstaves at the doorway  
Not only bar new-comers entering now,  
But caution those who left, for any cause,  
And would return, that morning draws too near;  
The ball must die off, shut itself up. We—  
I think, may dance lights out and sunshine in,  
And sleep off headache on our frippery—  
But friend the other, who cunningly stole out,  
And, after breathing the fresh air outside,  
Means to re-enter with a new costume,  
Will be advised go back to bed, I fear.  
I stick to privilege, on second thoughts!

*Mel.* Yes—you evade the adventure!—And, beside,  
Give yourself out for colder than you are.  
—King Philip, only, notes the lady's eyes?  
Don't they come in for somewhat of the motive  
With you too?

*Berth.* Yes—no: I am past that now!  
Gone 'tis—I cannot shut my eyes to fact.  
Of course, I might by forethought and contrivance  
Reason myself into a rapture. Gone!  
And something better's come instead, no doubt.

*Mel.* So be it! Yet, all the same, proceed my way,  
Though to your end; so shall you prosper best.  
The lady,—to be won for selfish ends,—  
Will be won easier my unselfish . . . call it,  
Romantic way.

*Berth.* Won easier?

*Mel.* Will not she?

*Berth.* There I profess humility without bound!  
Ill cannot speed—not I—the Emperor!

*Mel.* And I should think the Emperor best waived,  
From your description of her mood and way!  
You could look, if it pleased you, into hearts;  
But are too indolent and fond of watching  
Your own—you know that, for you study it!

*Berth.* Had you but seen the orator her friend,

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

So bold and voluble an hour before,  
Abashed to earth at aspect of the change!  
Make her an Empress? Ah, that changed the case!  
. . . Oh, I read hearts! And for my own behoof,  
I court her with my true worth—see the event!  
I learned my final lesson on that head  
When years ago,—my first and last essay!  
Before my uncle could obtain the ear  
Of his superior, help me from the dirt—  
Priscilla left me for a Brabant Duke  
Whose cheek was like the topaz on his thumb.  
I am past illusion on that score.

*Mel.* . . . . . Here comes  
The lady—

*Berth.* —And there you go! But do not! Give me  
Another chance to please you. Hear me plead!

*Mel.* You'll keep, then, to the lover, to the man?

*Enter the DUCHESS—followed by ADOLF and SABYNE,  
and, after an interval, by the Courtiers.*

*Berth.* Good auspice to our meeting!

*The D.* . . . . . May it prove!  
—And you, sir, will be Emperor one day?

*Berth.* (Ay—that's the point!) I may be Emperor.

*The D.* 'Tis not for my sake only, I am proud  
Of this you offer: I am prouder far  
That from the highest state should duly spring  
The highest, since most generous, of deeds.

*Berth.* (Generous—still that!) You underrate your-  
self.

You are, what I, to be complete, must have—  
Find now, and may not find, another time.  
While I career on all the world for stage,  
There needs at home my representative—

*The D.* —Such, rather, would some warrior-woman  
be—  
One dowered with lands and gold, or rich in friends—  
One like yourself!

*Berth.* . . . . . Lady, I am myself,

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

And have all these : I want what's not myself,  
Nor has all these. Why give one hand two swords?  
Here's one already : be a friend's next gift  
A silk glove, if you will—I have a sword!

*The D.* You love me, then?

*Berth.* Your lineage I revere—  
Honour your virtue, in your truth believe,  
Do homage to your intellect, and bow  
Before your peerless beauty.

*The D.* But, for love—

*Berth.* A further love I do not understand.  
Our best course is to say these hideous truths,  
And see them, once said, grow endurable.  
Like waters shuddering from their central bed,  
Black with the midnight bowels of the earth,  
That, once up-spouted by an earthquake's throe,  
A portent and a terror—soon subside,  
Freshen apace, take gold and rainbow hues  
In sunshine, sleep in shadow,—and, at last,  
Grow common to the earth as hills or trees—  
Accepted by all things they came to scare.

*The D.* You cannot love, then?

*Berth.* —Charlemagne, perhaps!  
Are you not over-curious in love-lore?

*The D.* I have become so, very recently.  
It seems, then, I shall best deserve esteem,  
Respect, and all your candour promises,  
By putting on a calculating mood—  
Asking the terms of my becoming yours?

*Berth.* Let me not do myself injustice, neither!  
Because I will not condescend to fictions  
That promise what my soul can ne'er acquit.  
It does not follow that my guarded phrase  
May not include far more of what you seek,  
Than wide professions of less scrupulous men.  
You will be Empress, once for all—with me  
The Pope disputes supremacy—you stand  
And none gainsays, the Earth's first woman!

*The D.*

That—

Or simple Lady of Ravestein again?

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

*Berth.* The matter's not in my arbitrement!  
Now I have made my claims—which I regret—  
Cede one, cede all!

*The D.* This claim then, you enforce?

*Berth.* The world looks on.

*The D.* And when must I decide?

*Berth.* "When," Lady? Have I said thus much so promptly

For nothing? Poured out, with such pains, at once  
What I might else have suffered to ooze forth  
Droplet by droplet in a life-time long,  
For aught less than as prompt an answer, too?  
All's fairly told now—who can teach you more?

*The D.* I do not see him!

*Berth.* I shall ne'er deceive!

This offer has been made befittingly  
Would time allow the better setting forth  
The good of it, with what is not so good,  
Advantage, and disparagement as well—  
But as it is, the sum of both must serve.  
I am already weary of this place—  
My thoughts are next stage on to Rome. Decide!  
The Empire—or,—not even Juliers now!  
Hail to the Empress—farewell to the Duchess!

[*The Courtiers, who have been drawing nearer and nearer, interpose.*

*Courtiers.* . . . "Farewell," Prince? when we break  
in at our risk—

*Clug.* (Almost upon Court-licence trespassing)—

*Courtiers.*—To point out how your claims are valid  
yet!

You know not, by the Duke her Father's will,  
The lady, if she weds beneath her rank,  
Forfeits her Duchy in the next heir's favour—  
So 'tis expressly stipulate. And if  
It can be shown 'tis her intent to wed  
A subject, then yourself, next heir, by right  
Succeed to Juliers.

*Berth.* What insanity? . . .

*Gui.* Sir, there's one Valence—the pale fiery man

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

You saw and heard, this morning—thought, no doubt,  
Was of considerable standing here—  
I put it to your penetration, Prince,  
If aught save love, the truest love for her,  
Had made him serve the lady as he did!  
He's simply a poor advocate of Cleves  
—Creeps here with difficulty, finds a place  
With danger, gets in by a miracle,  
And for the first time meets the Lady's face—  
So runs the story—is that credible?  
For, first—no sooner in, than he's apprised  
Fortunes have changed; you are all-powerful here,  
The Lady as powerles: he stands fast by her!

*The D.* [*Aside.*] (And do such deeds spring up from  
love alone?)

*Gui.* But here occurs the question, does the Lady  
Love him again? I say, How else can she?  
Can she forget how he stood singly forth  
In her defence, dared outrage all of us,  
Insult yourself—for what save love's reward?

*The D.* (And is love then the sole reward of love?)

*Gui.* But, love him as she may and must—you ask,  
Means she to wed him? "Yes," both natures answer!  
Both, in their pride, point out the sole result—  
Nought less would he accept nor she propose!  
For each conjecture was she great enough—  
—Will be, for this!

*Clug.* Though, now that this is known,  
Policy, doubtless, urges she deny . . .

*The D.* —What, sir, and wherefore?—since I am not

sure

That all is any other than you say?  
You take this Valence, hold him close to me,  
Him with his actions: can I choose but look?  
I am not sure, love trulier shows itself  
Than in this man, you hate and would degrade,  
Yet, with your worst abatement, show me thus:  
Nor am I—(thus made look within myself,  
Ere I had dared,)—now that the look is dared—  
Sure that I do not love him!

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

*Gui.* Hear you, Prince?

*Berth.* And what, sirs, please you, may this prattle mean?

—Unless to prove with what alacrity  
You give your Lady's secrets to the world—

—How much indebted, for discovering  
That quality, you make me, will be found  
When next a keeper for my own's to seek!

*Courtiers.* "Our Lady?"

*Berth.* —She assuredly remains!

*The D.* Ah, Prince—and you too can be generous?  
You could renounce your power, if this were so,  
And let me, as these phrase it, wed my love  
Yet keep my Duchy? You perhaps exceed  
Him, even, in disinterestedness!

*Berth.* How, Lady, should all this affect my purpose?  
Your will and choice are still as ever, free!  
Say, you have known a worthier than myself  
In mind and heart, of happier form and face;  
Others must have their birthright! I have gifts,  
To balance theirs, not blot them out of sight!  
Against a hundred other qualities,  
I lay the prize I offer. I am nothing—  
Wed you the Empire?

*The D.* And my heart away?

*Berth.* When have I made pretension to your heart?  
I give none. I shall keep your honour safe—  
With mine I trust you, as the sculptor trusts  
Yon marble woman with the marble rose,  
Loose on her hand, she never will let fall,  
In graceful, slight, silent security.  
You will be proud of my world-wide career,  
And I content in you the fair and good.  
What were the use of planting a few seeds,  
The thankless climate never would mature—  
Affections all repelled by circumstance?  
Enough: to these no credit I attach,—  
To what you own, find nothing to object.  
Write simply on my Requisition's face  
What shall content my friends—that you admit,

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

As Colombe of Ravestein, the claims therein,  
Or never need admit them, as my wife—  
And either way, all's ended.

*The D.* . . . . . Let all end!

*Berth.* The Requisition!

*Courtiers.* . . . . .—Valence holds, of course!

*Berth.* Desire his presence! [*ADOLF goes out.*]

*Courtiers.* [*to each other.*] Out it all comes yet!

He'll have his word against the bargain still!

He's not the man to tamely acquiesce!

One passionate appeal—upbraiding even,

Might turn the tide again! Despair not yet!

[*They retire a little.*]

*Berth.* [*to MELCHIOR.*] The Empire has its old success, my friend!

*Mel.* You've had your way: before the spokesman comes,

Let me, but this once, work a problem out,

And ever more be dumb! The Empire wins?

To better purpose I have read my books!

*Enter VALENCE.*

*Mel.* [*to the Courtiers.*] Apart, my masters!

[*To VALENCE.*] Sir, one word with you!

I am a poor dependent of the Prince's—

Pitched on to speak, as of slight consequence:

You are no higher, I find—in other words,

We two, as probably the wisest here,

Need not hold diplomatic talk like fools:

Suppose I speak, divesting the plain fact

Of all their tortuous phrases, fit for them—

Do you reply so, and what trouble's saved!

The Prince, then—an embroiled strange heap of news

This moment reaches him—if true or false,

All dignity forbids he should enquire

In person, or by worthier deputy;

Yet somehow must enquire, lest slander come:

And so 'tis I am pitched on. You have heard

His offer to your Lady?



## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

*Val.* Yes.

*Mel.* —Conceive

Her joy thereat?—

*Val.* I cannot.

*Mel.* No one can:

All draws to a conclusion, therefore.

*Val.* [*Aside.*] So!

No after-judgment—no first thought revised—

Her first and last decision!—me, she leaves—

Takes him—a simple heart is flung aside,

The ermine o'er a heartless breast embraced!

Oh Heaven, this mockery has been played too oft!

Once, to surprise the angels—twice, that fiends

Recording, might be proud they chose not so—

Thrice, many thousand times, to teach the world

All men should pause, misdoubt their strength, since

MIDI

Could have such chance yet fail so signally,

—But ever—ever—this farewell to heaven,

Welcome to earth—this taking death for life—

This spurning love and kneeling to the world—

Oh Heaven, it is too often and too old!

*Mel.* Well, on this point—what but an absurd  
rumour

Arises—these, its source—its subject, you!

Your faith and loyalty misconstruing,

They say, your service claims the lady's hand!

Of course, nor Prince nor Lady can respond—

Yet something must be said—for, were it true

You made such claim, the Prince would . . .

*Val.* Well, sir, would?

*Mel.* —Not only probably withdraw his suit,

But, very like, the lady might be forced

Accept your own.—Oh, there are reasons why!

But you'll excuse at present all save this,—

I think so. What we want is, your own witness,

For, or against—her good, or yours: decide!

*Val.* [*Aside.*] Be it her good if she accounts it so!

[*After a contest.*] For what am I but hers, to choose  
as she?

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

Who knows how far, beside, the light from her  
May reach, and dwell with, what she looks upon?

*Mel.* [to the Prince.] Now to him, you!

*Berth.* [to VALENCE.] My friend acquaints you, sir,  
The noise runs . . .

*Val.* . . . Prince, how fortunate are you,  
Wedding her as you will, in spite of it,  
To show belief in love! Let her but love you,  
All else you disregard! What else can be?  
You know how love is incompatible  
With falsehood—purifies, assimilates  
All other passions to itself.

*Mel.* . . . Ay, sir:  
But softly! Where in the object we select,  
Such love is, perchance, wanting?

*Val.* . . . Then, indeed,  
What is it you can take?

*Mel.* . . . Nay—ask the world!  
Youth, beauty, virtue, an illustrious name,  
An influence o'er mankind!

*Val.* . . . When man perceives . . .  
—Ah, I can only speak as for myself!

*The D.* Speak for yourself!

*Val.* . . . May I?—no, I have spoken,  
And time's gone by!—Had I seen such an one—  
As I loved her—weighing thoroughly that word—  
So should my task be to evolve her love—  
If for myself!—if for another—well!

*Berth.* Heroic truly! And your sole reward,—  
The secret pride in yielding up your own?

*Val.* Who thought upon reward? And yet how  
much  
Comes after—Oh what amplest recompence!  
Is the knowledge of her, nought? the memory,  
nought?

—Lady, should such an one have looked on you,  
Ne'er wrong yourself so far as quote the world,  
And say, love can go unrequited here!  
You will have blessed him to his whole life's end—  
Low passions hindered, baser cares kept back,

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

All goodness cherished where you dwelt—and dwell.  
What would he have? He holds you—you, both form,  
And mind, in his,—where self-love makes such room  
For love of you, he would not serve you now  
The vulgar way,—repulse your enemies,  
Win you new realms, or best, in saving you  
Die blissfully—that's past so long ago!  
He wishes you no need, thought, care of him—  
Your good, by any means, himself unseen,  
Away, forgotten!—He gives that life's task up,  
As it were . . . but this charge which I return—

*[Offers the Requisition, which she takes.*

Wishing your good!

*The D. [having subscribed it.]* And opportunely, sir—  
Since at a birthday's close, like this of mine,  
Good wishes gentle deeds reciprocate.  
Most on a wedding day, as mine is too,  
Should gifts be thought of: yours comes first by right.  
Ask of me!

*Berth.* He shall have whate'er he asks,  
For your sake and his own!

*Val. [Aside.]* If I should ask—  
The withered bunch of flowers she wears—perhaps,  
One last touch of her hand, I never more  
Shall see!

*[After a pause, presenting his paper to the Prince.*  
Cleves' Prince, redress the wrongs of Cleves!

*Berth.* I will, sir!

*The D. [as VALENCE prepares to retire.]*—Nay, do  
out your duty, first!

You bore this paper: I have registered  
My answer to it: read it and have done!

*[VALENCE reads it.*  
—I take him—give up Juliers and the world!

This is my Birth-day.

*Mel.* Berthold, my one hero  
Of the world she gives up, one friend worth my  
books,

Sole man I think it pays the pains to watch,—  
Speak, for I know you through your Popes and Kings!

## COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

*Berth.* [after a pause.] Lady, well rewarded! Sir,  
as well deserved!

I could not imitate—I hardly envy—  
I do admire you! All is for the best!  
Too costly a flower were you, I see it now,  
To pluck and set upon my barren helm  
To wither—any garish plume will do!  
I'll not insult you and refuse your Duchy—  
You can so well afford to yield it me,  
And I were left, without it, sadly off!  
As it is—for me—if that will flatter you,  
A somewhat wearier life seems to remain  
Than I thought possible where . . . 'faith, their life  
Begins already—they're too occupied  
To listen—and few words content me best!  
[Abruptly to the Courtiers.] I am your Duke, though!  
Who obey me here?

*The D.* Adolf and Sabyne follow us—

*Gui.* [starting from the Courtiers.]—And I?  
Do I not follow them, if I mayn't you?  
Shall not I get some little duties up  
At Ravestein and emulate the rest?  
God save you, Gaucelme! 'Tis my Birth-day, too!

*Berth.* You happy handful that remain with me  
. . . That is, with Dietrich the black Barnabite  
I shall leave over you—will earn your wages,  
Or Dietrich has forgot to ply his trade!  
Meantime,—go copy me the precedents  
Of every installation, proper styles,  
And pedigrees of all your Juliers' Dukes—  
While I prepare to go on my old way,  
And somewhat wearily, I must confess!

*The D.* [with a light joyous laugh as she turns  
from them.] Come, Valence, to our friends—  
God's earth . . .

*Val.* [as she falls into his arms.]—And thee

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